# CoP March Meeting Summary

April 29, 2022

2:00-3:00 pm ET

**Topic:** Monitoring Your Subgrantees

**Facilitator:** Obioma Okogbue

**Notetaker:** Alex Gabriel

**Additional NDTAC Representative: N/A**

**Attendees: Arkansas, Hawaii, Kansas, North Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, Wisconsin**

## Intro

The meeting began with introductions where each participant stated their names, states, and their weather report regarding how comfortable they felt with monitoring and evaluation. Some SCs were finishing up monitoring while others were preparing to engage in the early stages of monitoring. Similarly, some states expressed optimism about monitoring while others were eager to learn more about the process and lessons from their peers. As a group, they reestablished the norms for the CoP.

## Presentation

The facilitator began with a short presentation that explained the reasons and benefits of monitoring subgrantees. The reasons included program improvement, accountability and support, and compliance. Subgrantees are expected to monitor their respective programs and facilities no less than once every 3 years. Most of the statute speaks to subgrantee actions, but SCs are responsible for ensuring that these activities take place.

The group also learned about the three levels where monitoring occurs:

* Federal monitoring: The U.S. Department of Education (ED) monitors State education agencies (SEAs) that receive funds.
* Subgrantee monitoring: SEAs monitor their State agency (SA) and local educational agency (LEA) subgrantees; and
* Facility monitoring: SA and LEA subgrantees monitor the facilities and programs to which they allocate funds.

The group also reviewed the statutory requirements on program evaluation in [Sec. 1431](https://neglected-delinquent.ed.gov/title-i-part-d-statute#sec1431) of the Statute. The presentation ended with key points in monitoring and evaluating subgrantees.

**Key Points**

SCs are advised to prepare in advance by:

* Gathering information to facilitate your monitoring review. You can effectively gather information through various means.
  + For example, you can use one-on-one interviews during onsite visits with youth or staff; disseminate web-based or pen and paper questionnaires to large groups of staff and/or youth; and hold focus groups or interviews with a small number of individuals simultaneously.
* Including a range of respondents and examining patterns across responses to avoid biased data or collection of skewed information.
* Thinking “what information do we need, what information do we want, who do we need to speak with, and how do we collect this information?”
* Preparing to respond through:
  + Confirming receipt, completeness, and quality of information
  + Submitting an official response and or corrective action plan if needed. Or having subgrantees submit a plan to address any identified noncompliance

## Group discussion

States discussed their different monitoring practices, including documentation and experience with in-person versus virtual monitoring. One state shared that they are creating an application that serves that serves a dual purpose to include monitoring. Other states mentioned using a similar method. A few coordinators had started their roles during the COVID-19 pandemic and so had only engaged in desk monitoring. Other coordinators had recently started in-person monitoring, and several expressed positive experiences from site visits.

A coordinator asked about frequency of monitoring. The frequency of monitoring varied across states with some required by state law to monitor more frequently. A few coordinators mentioned that they were on a three-year cycle. Some states monitored specific subgrantees annually. One coordinator shared additional information on how they monitor on a three-year cycle, including keeping a spreadsheet to track which facility or agency is due for monitoring and then notifying the agency when they are up for monitoring.

Another coordinator shared that, to prepare for monitoring, they set up notes and questions and that building relationships with subgrantees is critical to get the story behind the data. Another SC stated they have lots of facilities and are strategic on how they monitor. For example, state law requires monitoring of certain facilities more frequently than the federal law requires, and because of the large number of facilities, they conduct desk monitoring for subgrantees with a clean record while conducting more frequent monitoring for subgrantees that have had challenges. The coordinator described using an online platform to gather monitoring documents, questions, and responses from LEAs. In addition, another SC described using a similar online platform where facilities can submit documents, which are used for annual monitoring.

The facilitator asked states about how they decide whom to monitor. SCs described using risk assessments in a variety of ways. A couple of SCs described using a risk assessment to conduct monitoring in coordination with districts. One SC noted that their state used a comprehensive risk assessment model that is used by other federal teams.

To conclude, coordinators discussed self-evaluation tools. Two coordinators mentioned self-assessment tools were brought up when another program was audited by ED. They elaborated that these tools would give facilities a way to self-evaluate. One SC described using self-assessment tools with school districts as a useful way to monitor facilities who are off cycle. An SC shared that they used an evaluation tool and guide that is streamlined to help subgrantees begin the initial steps of evaluation, identify a root cause, and engage in planning. The tool is used as a resource and collected but is not required.

## Housekeeping Items

Next Community meeting will be June 30th, 2022, at 2:00 pm-3:00 pm ET

Please reach out to Obioma with any questions or requests regarding CoP 2 at the following email: [OOkogbue@childtrends.org](mailto:OOkogbue@childtrends.org)

Please refer to the ND Communities website for summaries and CoP member listings for future use.

Reminder: the 2022 NDTAC Annual Conference will be taking place May 23, 34, and 26th. Official invitations and conference agendas have been distributed. Please send an email to [NDTAC@longevityconsulting.com](mailto:NDTAC@longevityconsulting.com) if you have not received an invite.

## Final Thoughts

Please share any feedback you have concerning the topics, format, or facilitators so we can improve the overall experience for all SCs.