

Center on Research and Evaluation (CORE)

Research, Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

research practice partnerships and evaluation consultation; collaborative development, design and execution of research and evaluation studies; use of emerging evidence to inform improvements; reports, presentations, manuscripts, recommendations, training and capacity building

Data Collection

data collection, logistics management, conduct interview/observations, recruit and train reliable data collectors, and recruit participants.

Data Processing & Management

high integrity data entry, data cleaning and database creation, and database management.

Data Analysis and Supports

quantitative and qualitative data analysis; coaching and training on analysis and interpretation

Measurement

surveys, observation forms, academic achievement measures, interviews

Consulting and Design

study design, data audits and data planning, logic models, grant proposals, evaluation capacity and research infrastructure



working with



Community Partnerships



University Programs



Literacy Programs



STEM/



Foundations and Funding



College Access



Out-of-School Time Programs and Ecosystems



Workforce



Early Childhood



Data access and research infrastructure



Professional Development Programs



Family Well-Being Programs



Parent Programs



Effective Instructional Practices



Implementation Readiness

Southern Methodist University Center on Research & Evaluation

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SMU | ANNETTE CALDWELL SIMMONS
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION & HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

CENTER ON RESEARCH & EVALUATION



Center on Research and Evaluation (CORE)

The Center on Research and Evaluation (CORE) is dedicated to supporting and expanding SMU's commitment to teaching, research, and service in communities and the larger global society. CORE conducts high-quality collaborative research and evaluation to drive positive and sustainable change in individuals, schools, organizations and communities.

Our Approach

Rigorous and collaborative evaluation can improve programs and drive outcomes. CORE conducts comprehensive evaluations that focus both on improving programs and demonstrating impacts.

CORE uses a variety of formative evaluation activities to provide actionable data to our partners about how program implementation is proceeding, the extent to which goals are being reached, and what changes could and should be made to improve outcomes. By collaborating closely and being transparent about our methods, CORE aims to increase the capacity of the organizations we work with to be able to plan, implement and evaluate their work more effectively.

CORE pairs process and outcome evaluation techniques to demonstrate program impact on identified outcomes. Relying on logic models that specify theories of change, CORE works with community partners to identify a) implementation measures that will show how an intervention was delivered and b) appropriate indicators of change. We introduce rigor into our analyses by linking implementation data to outcome data.

Our Services

CORE services include collaboratively developing orienting questions that the study or evaluation will answer. We help specify how the program or intervention is intended to work in order to produce the outcomes expected, and we develop or select the proper instruments to measure implementation and outcomes.

CORE specializes in developing appropriate methodologies and "best-fit" designs to answer research and evaluation questions. This includes considering how innovative programs are and what level of evidence for program effectiveness is most appropriate.

CORE acknowledges the wide range of evaluation tools and strategies available to evaluators and researchers. We frequently seek to develop collaborative designs that focus on continuous improvement, aiming to understand what works, for whom, under what circumstances.

CORE has developed a specialty in multi-year research-practice or evaluation partnerships that utilize large quantitative data sets and that leverage the research and data infrastructure of the university.

Equity

CORE is committed to equitable practices in all of our projects, deliverables, and services. We believe this starts with a foundational commitment to collaboration, acknowledging and valuing the perspectives and wisdom of our partners and program participants. Frequently, this commitment shows up in our co-design principles as we work to ask and answer questions that matter most to our partners. This commitment carries through our analyses and reporting, including frequent and deliberate questioning our assumptions.

Quantitative Analysis

CORE has a number of quantitative experts on staff, and we frequently collaborate with SMU colleagues when additional expertise is warranted. Examples include demographic or descriptive summaries, basic mean comparisons, as well as measures of relationships or associations. CORE analysts are also well-versed in advanced statistical analyses, including but not limited to: multiple regression, hierarchical linear modeling, cluster analysis, propensity score matching, and regression discontinuity designs.

Qualitative Analysis

CORE also employs qualitative experts and similarly collaborates with SMU colleagues when specific qualitative expertise is needed. Our approach to qualitative analysis is broad and contingent on the level of evidence sought. We may, at times, highlight key themes or findings from interview or open-ended survey comments. At other times, we implement a full-scale and highly rigorous qualitative coding approach that includes open and axial coding, development and refinement of reliable operational definitions, establishing coder reliability and then linking the presence of themes or codes to other constructs of interest.

Reporting and dissemination of findings

CORE provides flexible reporting to our project partners, aiming to meet the needs of the project. Rapid, formative reporting may supplement traditional "white paper" technical reports; manuscripts, collaboratively written with our project partners may be utilized in research projects. CORE also co-presents with partners at local or national conferences, and in some instances, develops data dashboards to display incoming data and trends.

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