SEP TUTORIAL 3 – WORKING WITH EVALUATION PROFESSIONALS

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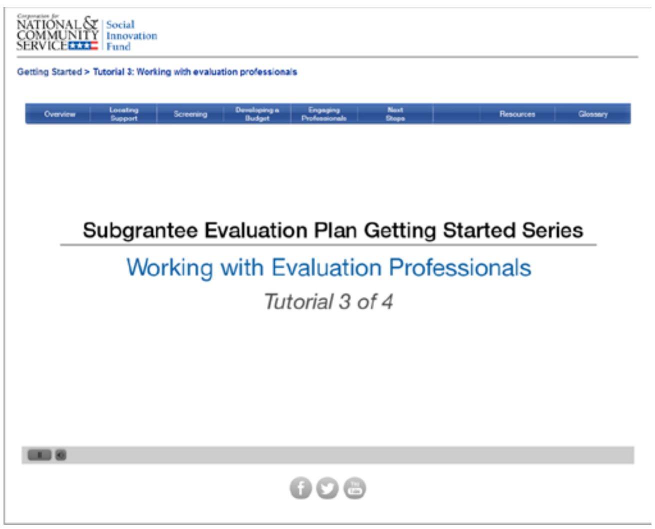

Narrator: Welcome to the SEP Development Tutorial Module 3: Working with evaluation professionals.

SCREEN 2

Narrator: This course provides basic guidance on how to work with the professionals who will assist you with your evaluation.

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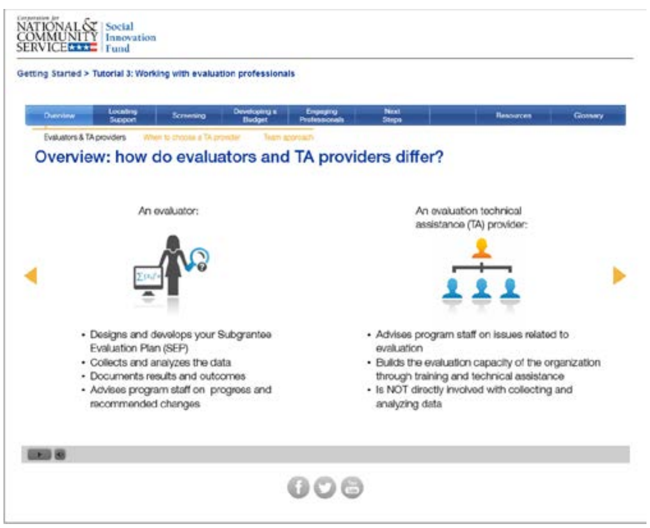
Course objectives

After completing this course, you will be able to:

- Select an evaluator and/or evaluation TA provider
- List the elements of an evaluation budget
- Engage an evaluator and/or evaluation TA provider
- Advise subgrantees on these topics

SCREEN 3



Narrator: Will you need an evaluator, a TA provider, or both?

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Overview: how do evaluators and TA providers differ?

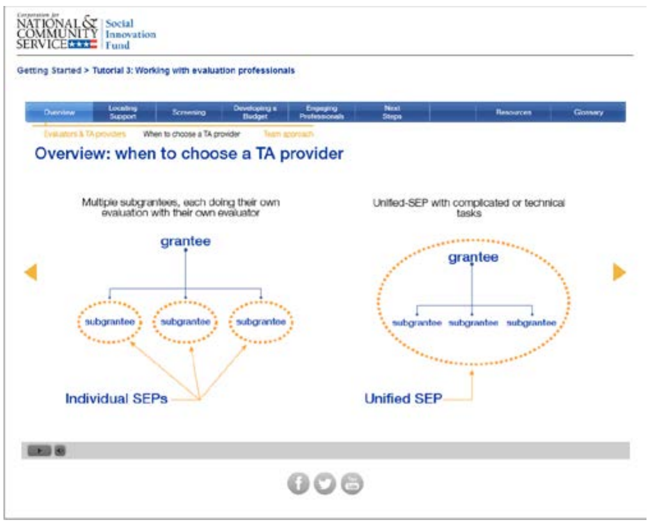
An evaluator:

- Designs and develops your Subgrantee Evaluation Plan (SEP)
- Collects and analyzes the data
- Documents results and outcomes
- Advises program staff on progress and recommended changes

An evaluation technical assistance (TA) provider:

- Advises program staff on issues related to evaluation
- Builds the evaluation capacity of the organization through training and technical assistance
- Is NOT directly involved with collecting and analyzing data

SCREEN 4



Narrator: There are two situations where you might consider engaging an evaluation TA provider:

First, you have multiple subgrantees who are each doing their *own* evaluation with their *own* evaluators. In this situation, the TA provider would likely work closely with the subgrantees' evaluators to assure SIF requirements and expectations are met and any challenges are addressed early.

You might also consider engaging a TA provider if you have a unified-SEP that requires subgrantees to do complicated or technical data collection or aggregation tasks. In this case, you might want your external evaluator to also act as the TA provider, *or* you might want a separate TA provider depending on your evaluator's skills and availability.

SCREEN 5

Narrator: Depending on the scope of your SIF work, you may want to use a team approach, in which the skills, expertise, and background are distributed across a small group of evaluators and/or evaluation TA providers.

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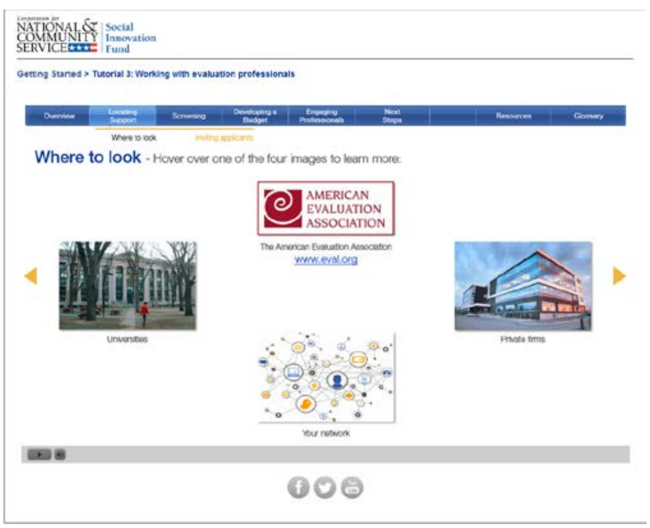


Narrator: Finding an evaluator will take effort. Here are a few and ideas to resources to help you get started.

Additional Screen Text:

Where to look – Hover over one of the four images to learn more

AEA – A good place to begin your search, if you don't already have an evaluator in mind, is the American Evaluation Association or AEA. AEA is an international professional association of approximately 7300 evaluators world-wide.

Use their Find an Evaluator feature to search by area of expertise, geographic region, or to browse all listings. Their Resume Search can also be used to investigate potential applicants found through other venues. www.eval.org

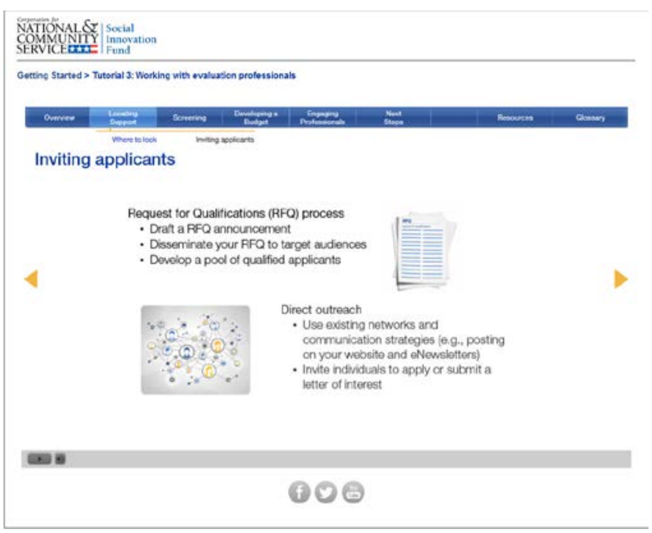
Universities – Universities are excellent places to connect with potential evaluators in your area. Faculty and graduate students often engage in professional evaluation services related to their fields of study. The AEA website lists universities offering advanced degrees in evaluation.

Private firms – Private firms are also listed on the AEA website. Hundreds of private firms from all over the U.S are also listed on the AEA website, with descriptions of their specializations, locations, and contact information.

Your network – Your own networks are also a source for finding potential evaluators. Word of mouth and referrals from peer organizations and colleagues in the field can often provide useful information. Your own networks can be especially valuable if you are seeking specific evaluation expertise within an issue area, like health, youth development or economic opportunity. Consider:

- Philanthropic/nonprofit associations and affiliations.
- Other issue area organizations (e.g., health, economic opportunity, youth development).

SCREEN 7



Narrator: Now that you know where to look, it's time to reach out to potential applicants.

One approach is the "Request for Qualifications" or RFQ process, which works in the same way as a grant-based "request for proposal" process does. The RFQ provides details about what you are looking for in an evaluator or evaluation TA provider along with background information on your SIF project.

Be sure to provide enough detail and background information to assure your will get comparable responses across applications.

Direct outreach, using your existing networks and communication strategies, is another approach. Posting the RFQ or similar announcement to your website and through other electronic communications will reach those within your network.

SCREEN 8

Narrator: Once you have a pool of applicants, you'll need to screen them carefully. Here are a few suggestions to help with this process.

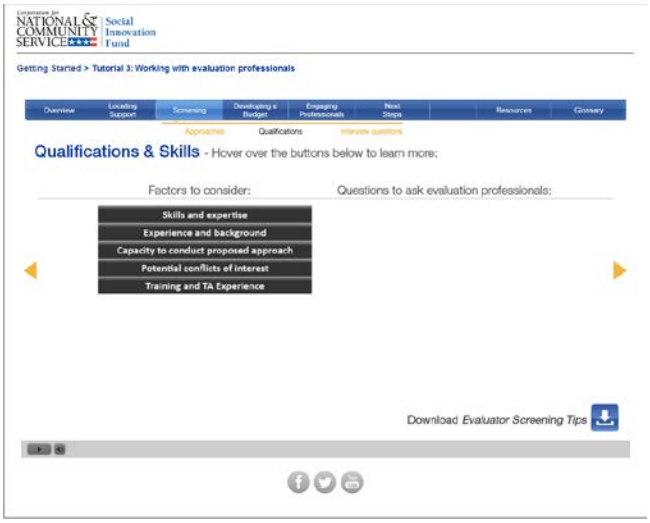
As part of your screening process, it's critical that you conduct a reference check to verify that the potential candidate possesses the qualifications, track record, and level of responsiveness that would assure a good fit for your organization.

Additional Screen Text:

See what other grantees suggest:

- Specific experience related to your issue area
- A "pulse" on the community
- A strong understanding of your agency
- A cultural "fit" with your agency
- A fit with your communication & collaboration style
- Also, be certain to identify areas of potential weakness

SCREEN 9



Narrator: The professionals you select to assist you should have relevant experience and a background aligned to your program's content, size, scope, and information needs. Hover over the buttons below to reveal more detail about factors you should consider.

Additional Screen Text:

Qualifications and Skills – Hover over the buttons below to learn more:

Skills and expertise –

- What academic fields are they trained in, and what is the highest degree they have earned in the field?
- What other information can you find on their professional qualifications, such as certifications, awards, published peer-reviewed articles, etc.?

Experience and background –

- What is their background and experience?
- To what extent do they have experience working with a program like yours (program focus, size, population, scale, etc.)?
- How familiar are they with organizations and/or programs similar to yours in mission or intent?

Capacity to conduct proposed approach –

- To what extent do they have experience conducting the type of research design you wish to employ?
- Do they have an understanding of the program requirements?
- Are they willing to commit to the requirements of the program?
- Do they have specific experience:

- o Conducting experimental and/or quasi-experimental research design?
- o Using statistical matching techniques?
- o Implementing advanced data analysis approaches?

Potential conflicts of interest –

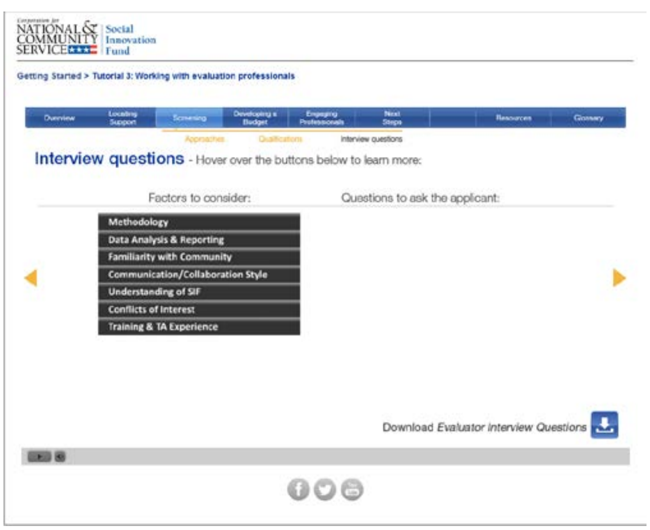
- Who are their current and recent clients?
- What potential exists for creating a conflict of interest with this group?
    - o Who/what organizations are in a position to influence them professionally, for instance, association with a university?
    - o Do their core professional or philosophical leanings present potential for conflicts of interest (e.g., proponent/opponent of your program approach)?

Training and TA Experience –

- What experience do they have providing training and/or technical assistance to organizations similar to yours?
- What is their philosophy around providing training and/or technical assistance to adult learners?
- What successes/challenges have they experienced? How did they address the challenges?

Download *Evaluator Screening Tips*: http://sep-tutorials.org/docs/3_EvaluatorScreeningTips.pdf

SCREEN 10



Narrator: After your initial screening, conduct interviews. Consider the following categories of questions to help select the applicant best suited for your SIF project.

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Interview Questions – Hover over the buttons below to learn more:

Methodology –

- What experience do you have conducting rigorous program evaluations with randomized control trial or quasi-experimental evaluation designs?
- What factors do you consider when selecting an appropriate evaluation design?
- What similar programs (interventions) have you evaluated?

Data analysis & reporting –

- How do you address data analysis and reporting for an evaluation that is similar in size, complexity, and number of sites?
- What processes do you typically use to analyze and interpret the qualitative data? Quantitative data?
- How do you involve your clients in the reporting process?

Familiarity with community –

- Have you worked in this or similar communities?
- What experience do you have with this issue area? With this population?
- What challenges do you anticipate in conducting the evaluation in this issue area? With this population?

Communication/collaboration style –

- How do you work with multiple partners?
- How do you communicate with multiple partners on the progress of the evaluation?
- What specific roles do you expect multiple partners to play in this evaluation?

Understanding of SIF –

- What do you know about the Social Innovation Fund, or similar federal initiatives?
- Given your understanding of the Social Innovation Fund, what key questions would you like to address in this evaluation? Why?

Conflicts of interest –

- Given your understanding of the project, what potential conflicts of interest may exist (with stakeholders, other agencies, or with your own personal philosophy, values, and/or beliefs)?
- How will you maintain your independence and objectivity in conducting this evaluation?

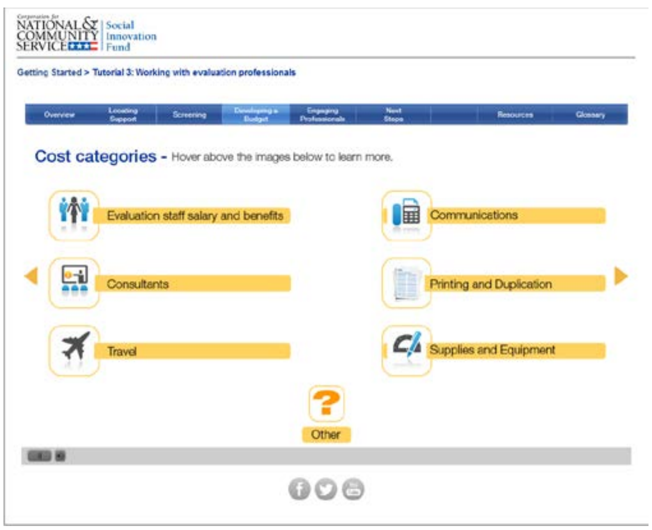
Training & TA Experience –

- Describe your experience providing training or technical assistance on implementing an evaluation to similar organizations.

- What training or technical assistance on conducting the evaluation do you feel will be important for you to provide for our partners?

Download *Evaluator Interview Questions*:
http://sep-tutorials.org/docs/Finding_an_Evaluator_Interview_Questions (1).pdf

SCREEN 11



Narrator: Rigorous evaluations require sufficient dedication of resources, including time and money, to be successful. Your SEP should reflect the evaluation steps it will take to get to your highest proposed level of evidence during the SIF grant. Therefore, your evaluation support budget should align to this effort.

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Cost categories – Hover over the images below to learn more:

Evaluation staff salary and benefits – Be sure to include the amount of time and the level of expertise of staff members working with the evaluation support team will impact the budget.

Communications – Include communication expenses include such things as postage, telephone, and use of online technologies such as webinars.

Consultants – The cost of external evaluators and TA providers should be aligned to their level of effort in supporting your evaluation goals.

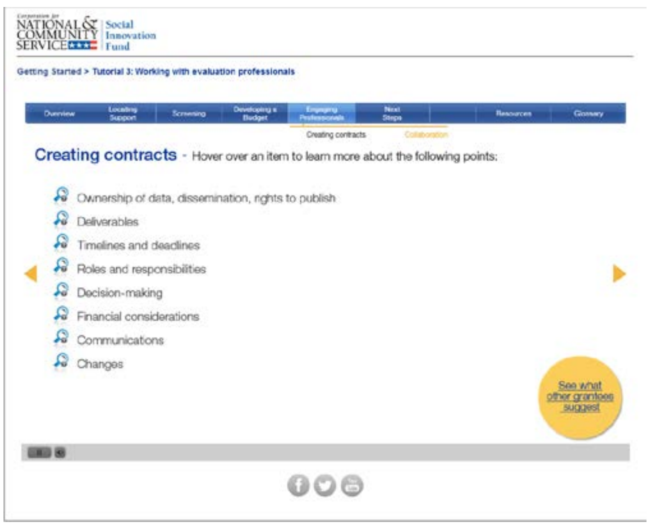
Printing and duplication – Be sure to cover the costs of preparing any data collection instruments, reports, library materials, and other documents.

Travel – Travel expenses for staff and/or consultants will depend on the location and number of sites.

Supplies and equipment – Allow for any supplies and equipment, such as computers, software, or recording devices that may need to be purchased or rented for the evaluation. Be sure to include costs for data collection systems and support.

Other – What other costs will be associated with evaluation and technical assistance? Click Resources above and view the Budget template to see additional cost considerations.

SCREEN 12



Narrator: A clear contract serves as a foundation for a good working relationship. Clarifying roles, responsibilities, and other sources of potential conflict and miscommunication *upfront* allows you and your evaluator or evaluation TA provider to focus on the program, rather than on contractual issues.

Additional Screen Text:

Creating contracts – Hover over an item to learn more about the following points:

Ownership of data, dissemination, rights to publish – Who will own the data and information coming out of the evaluation – your organization, the evaluator, or is it shared? In the case of federally-funded work, you may be able to retain the rights so long as it's available, free-of-charge, in the public domain.

Deliverables – What are the deliverables – like reports, summaries, and analyses? How are they aligned to the scope of work?

Timelines and deadlines – What are the timelines and deadlines? Make sure they cover the length of the contract and scope of work.

Roles and responsibilities – What are the responsibilities of your organization and what are the responsibilities of the evaluator or TA provider? What are the differences in each of your roles?

Decision-making – Who has decision-making authority and what is the chain of command for making decisions? What decisions are appropriate for the evaluator? When should the evaluator seek guidance from your organization?

Financial considerations – What is the budget for the work, does it articulate allowable costs and how the payments are processed?

Communications – What are your expectations for communications—for example, weekly check-ins and monthly report?

Changes – How are changes to the contract made? It is common in evaluation work for circumstances and situations to evolve.

See what other grantees suggest:

- Make sure your contractor's scope of work is aligned to your CNCS agreement, especially timelines and deliverable due dates.
- Be sure to stagger the contractor's due dates with CNCS's due dates so that you have time to process the information.
- Align the contractor's scope of work with the subgrantees' contracts as well.

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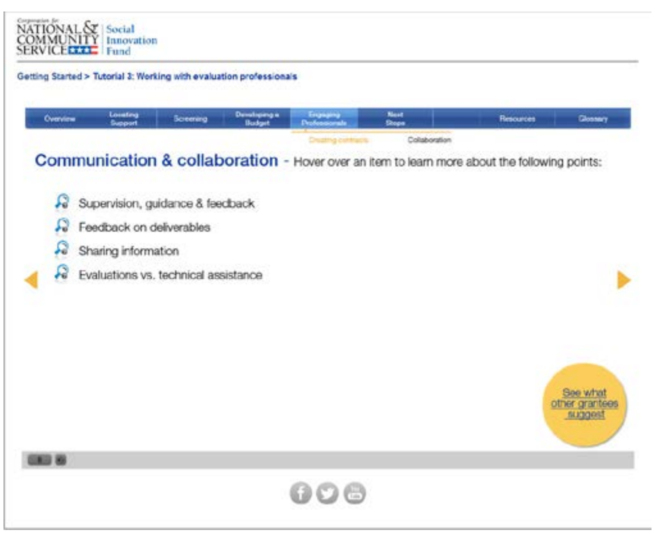

Narrator: Clear communication and collaboration will be crucial to your success. You may employ a lead evaluator who works directly with your all of your subgrantees, or you might interact directly with different evaluators associated with each subgrantee. You might also use some combination of the two. The same is true for providing TA support.

Whatever you situation may be, here are a few guidelines to consider.

Additional Screen Text:

Communication and collaboration – Hover over an item to learn more about the following points:

Supervision, guidance & feedback – Providing regular, ongoing supervision and guidance is critical. Some grantees opt for weekly meetings to check-in, monitor progress, and address challenges or concerns as they arise.

Feedback on deliverables – Agreeing on your process for reviewing and providing feedback on deliverables will support a positive work relationship. Some contractors prefer feedback via email first, followed by a phone or in-person meeting.

Sharing information – Sharing and discussing CNCS/SIF information early and ongoing as new guidance is available will assure your SIF work stays on track.

Evaluations vs. technical assistance – Clarifying the difference between conducting evaluations and providing technical assistance will reduce confusion around roles. Both are critical, but clarity is crucial.

An evaluator's primary responsibility is to assure the evaluation efforts are achieving the goals intended. The role of an evaluation TA provider is to build the subgrantee's capacity to conduct evaluation rather than do the evaluation for them.

See what other grantees suggest:

- Consider establishing an online community using Ning, Google Sites, or other platform as a way to encourage communications, sharing, and learning across your SIF portfolio.
- As the grantee, expect to have a higher level of direct communication with all stakeholders during the time your evaluators are coming on board.

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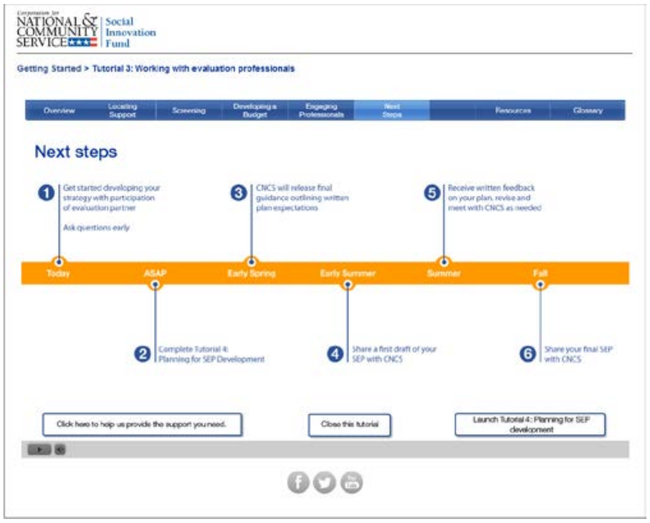

Narrator: Here are the next steps you will want to take. Be sure to take the next tutorial in this series and review the resources page. Visit the Knowledge Network for answers to questions as they arise, or check with your program officer.

Additional Screen Text:

Next steps:

1. Today – Get started developing your strategy with participation of evaluation partner. Ask questions early.
2. ASAP – Complete Tutorial 4: Planning for SEP Development.
3. Early Spring – CNCS will release final guidance outlining written plan expectations.
4. Early Summer – Share first draft of your SEP with CNCS.
5. Summer – Receive written feedback on your plan, revise and meet with CNCS as needed.
6. Fall – Share your final SEP with CNCS.