



HLC Accreditation Evidence Document

Title: UNM Evaluation Lab

Office of Origin: Office of Academic Affairs

Description: A collection of screenshots from the UNM Evaluation Lab website. This service is an affiliation of the Master of Public Policy program at the university, and coordinates with local non-profit organizations and graduate students to facilitate program evaluations.

Date: 2018



UNM Evaluation Lab

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About Us

The New Mexico Evaluation Lab @ UNM works to build evaluation capacity in non-profit community organizations and government agencies throughout New Mexico, and to facilitate the development of sound state policies around evaluation in New Mexico. Graduate students receive training in a two-semester course that includes foundational learning in the classroom and a practicum involving a collaborative project with community organizations. Faculty engaged in related research, staff research scientists from UNM's policy centers, and experienced community evaluators supervise the practicum. Students, faculty, researchers and participating organizations form an advisory board to the Lab, and come together at an annual [Workshop](#) to share ideas, experiences and knowledge. The Evaluation Lab is affiliated with the [Master of Public Policy](#) program at UNM.

The Need

Program evaluation training is of growing interest to program funders, providers and students. Public and private funders are increasingly concerned that the money they spend demonstrate impact and be used effectively. In many federally funded programs, providers are encouraged, and in some cases required, to use evidence based programs. At the same time, funders are aware of the dangers of limiting innovation and experimentation, which may be an unintended consequence of promoting a small number of programs that managed to attract the resources needed to run a randomized trial. Funders would like to be able to support local, homegrown programs that can establish their effectiveness.

Community organizations must be able to assess their own effectiveness, both to satisfy funders, and, more fundamentally, to improve service to their clients. These organizations often lack expertise in program evaluation.

Finally, students in the social sciences are keen on receiving training in program evaluation. Graduates who have skills in assessment, evaluation, data collection and analysis will have strong employment opportunities in business, government and the non-profit sectors. Participation in the Evaluation Lab will also provide students with networking opportunities.

About

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Is the Evaluation Lab Right for Me?

Click on a topic below to see how the UNM Evaluation Lab can address your organization's needs.

I want to...

[...demonstrate the value of my organization to others.](#)

You interact with your clients every day and you can see how your program supports and empowers them. The Evaluation Lab can conduct client interviews and focus groups that document what your program means to your clients. We can also help you track indicators that measure the outcomes that you and your clients care about.

[...test my organization's effectiveness.](#)

Over the years, you have developed a home-grown program. Your funders are asking for evidence of effectiveness. The Evaluation Lab can validate your program's logic model, assess how your day to day operations match your model, and help you track client

[...track client progress.](#)

Maybe you collect lots of data to meet program requirements or for billing purposes. The Evaluation Lab can help you adapt your current data systems to help you track client progress. We can transform the data you already have into compelling visualizations that tell your organization's story.

[...build evaluation capacity.](#)

The Evaluation Lab can help you develop the staff and organizational capacity to monitor your program outcomes in an ongoing and sustainable way. Imagine having an ongoing evaluation plan that gives you the ability to report client progress and outcomes to staff, board members, funders and the clients themselves. Think of how the data from that plan can inform program decisions, staff training and innovation of your program.

[...assess the strengths and needs of my target communities.](#)

The Evaluation Lab assembles data from official sources and by canvassing neighborhoods to provide accurate and accessible visualizations of community strengths and needs.

For Organizations

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UNM Evaluation Lab

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Melissa Binder

Director, Institute for Social Research

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Bio:

Melissa Binder, Ph.D., has been a professor in the Department of Economics at the University of New Mexico since 1995 and the Director of ISR since the summer of 2013. Her research and policy interests include labor market and educational equity, and among her publications are analyses of the motherhood wage gap, gender equity in faculty pay, and the socio-economic achievement gap in higher education. As director of ISR, Dr. Binder participates in data and policy analysis for the New Mexico community in the areas of pay equity, family well-being, early childhood programs and K-12 initiatives.

Professional Experience

Melissa worked as a community organizer in Albuquerque in the mid-1980s, and later as a union representative in New York, where she saw first hand the limits of pursuing social justice in a context of economic inequality. These experiences impelled her to pursue a Ph.D. in Economics. Over time, she has become increasingly interested in applying her training in the service of New Mexico, both as a teacher, and by participating in policy-relevant projects at UNM and throughout the state. Recent projects include:

Achievement Gaps in Higher Education

Curricular Innovations: Melissa pioneered the "Success" model for introductory economics courses, in which one hour per week is devoted to active learning activities in small group "labs." As Undergraduate Director of the UNM Economics Department, Melissa promoted changes in the curriculum that led to greater emphasis on writing, and she developed a new course that provides students with math, data analysis and writing tools that are expected to improve learning outcomes in core intermediate courses. She also taught a "Community Economics Lab," in which students performed economic analyses for contemporary state policy issues.

Along with colleague Kate Krause, Melissa brought \$1.2 million in scholarship aid to UNM students as part of a national financial aid experiment to determine whether aid tied to academic performance can improve college outcomes for low-income students.

Several of her scholarly works explore the incentive and distribution effects of New Mexico's Lottery Success Scholarships, which pay tuition for New Mexican high school graduates who meet certain college performance requirements.

Early Childhood and K-12 in New Mexico

Melissa worked with Becky Kilburn of RAND and the New Mexico Sentencing Commission to assist a local social services agency in tracking its clients' outcomes. She has also participated in evaluations of early childhood interventions for Taos Health Systems and of the impact of arts education for Partners in Education Partners in Education Foundation for the Santa Fe Public Schools.

Pay Equity

Melissa co-authored a report and several publications with Economics department colleagues on pay equity for UNM faculty. This work led to significant equity adjustments for women and minorities.

Education

Ph.D., October 1995, Columbia University, New York City, New York, Economics.

M.A., October 1992, Columbia University, New York City, New York, Economics.

B.A. cum laude, May 1984, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, Philosophy.

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