The MTS Internship Program

Materials Development
Training
Support Services

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MTS Project—The Evaluation Center—Sponsored by NSF
Background and Purpose of MTS

An NSF grant called “Materials Development, Training, and Support Services” (MTS)\(^1\).

To increase evaluation capacity among STEM educators

Summer evaluation institutes and internships were part of the training component.

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\(^1\) Project MTS was awarded as a two-year grant (9552988) effective September 1, 1995. Funding to continue the project (9802688) for two additional years was received July 1, 1998. A no-cost extension was granted in 2000 to extend the grant to June 30, 2001. Funding for MTS, 2001-2004 (0101842) was received May 1, 2001. A no-cost extension was granted in 2004 to extend the grant to April 30, 2005.
Goals of the Internship

- Improve evaluation capabilities of institute participants
- Serve the evaluation needs of NSF projects
- Increase project-level interest and skill in evaluation
- Construct and try out evaluation tools that can be shared.
The Internship in a Nutshell

- An intensive 3-week summer institute on evaluation
- Selected institute participants serve in a paid, mentored internship
- Assistance to a project (usually an Advanced Technological Education [ATE] or other STEM-based project)
Key Characteristics

Four key stakeholder groups:

- Interns
- Project collaborators
- Mentors
- Internship coordinator

Intern-Project geographic proximity (within 200 miles).
Location of Projects

Some dots represent multiple internships.
Key Activities and Events

Before Internship

- Preparations
- Identification of Interns & Projects
- Preorientation Activities
- Orientation Workshop

During Internship

- Intern Evaluation Activities
- Intern Reporting
  - Weekly
  - Via Web
- Project Collaborators’ Monthly Feedback
- Mentors’ Support & Site Visit

Completion of Internship

- Interns’ Evaluation Reports
- Interns’ Instruments
- Interns’ Final Summary Reports
- Collaborators’ Final Surveys
Layers of Evaluation Support

- Opportunities for Sharing Evaluation Work at National and Regional Conferences
- The Evaluation Center’s Tools and Resources Web Site
- Internship Opportunities with an Authentic Evaluation Project
- On-going Coordinator Management
- Mentor Site Visit with Intern and Project Collaborator
- On-call Mentor Guidance and Counsel
- An Orientation Workshop
- In-depth Study of Evaluation (e.g. The Three-week Summer Evaluation Institute)
Projects Served

51 internships completed

- 42 NSF ATE projects
- 5 NASA projects
- 4 Other NSF-supported projects

Distribution of Internships Across Project Type
Internship Deliverables

- Evaluation report to project
- Evaluation instruments (e.g., surveys and interview, focus group, and observation protocols)
- Summary report to EC
Project Satisfaction
(from collaborators’ final survey)

- 90% (47/52)* of the surveys were returned
- 85% (40/47) agreed/strongly agreed that the intern’s performance was satisfactory
- 94% (44/47) agreed/strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the intern program
- 94% (44/47) would participate again
- 98% (46/47) would recommend the program to others

*One collaborator completed a survey, but the intern’s work was finished by MTS staff.
Intern Satisfaction
(from intern summary reports-42)

What has been the impact of this intern work on you?

- Learned new specific evaluation skills or knowledge (18)
- Gained insights about their own evaluation abilities (e.g. strengths or weaknesses) from self-assessment (9)
- Gained professional evaluation experience (7)
- Increased interest in pursuing evaluation (7)
- Increased confidence in ability to conduct evaluations (6)
Intern Satisfaction
(from intern summary report-42)

List and briefly describe the primary strengths of the internship program.

- Mentor support and guidance (23)
- Opportunity to work with a real evaluation project (13)
- Opportunities for networking with other evaluators (8)
Intern Suggestions
(from intern summary report-42)

- List and briefly describe the primary weaknesses of the internship program.
  - Would like more hours to complete the work (8)
  - Would like more mentor support (7)
  - Would like more project collaborator/staff accessibility (5)
Intern Satisfaction
(from intern summary report-42)

What special opportunities emerged for you/others as a result of this intern experience?

- Concrete offers for evaluation work (10)
- Potential opportunities for evaluation work (6)
- Opportunities for writing about evaluation (3)
Internship Outcome/Next Step

- 46* persons available and able to serve as evaluators of STEM projects
- Collaboration with Westat to write a casebook of good evaluation examples of NSF projects
  - Based upon 6 to 10 former interns’ evaluation work

*5 interns did a second internship
Factors in the Success of the Internships

- Sound workplan
- Strong-regular communications
- Intern and collaborator relationship
- Intern follow through to completion
For More Information

- The Evaluation Center
  http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr/
- Project MTS
  http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr/mts/
- The MTS Intern Program
  http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr/intern/
- Tools and Resources
  http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr/ess/
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Audience Participation

- Questions
- Implications for the Center
Identification of Interns/Projects

In August, letters soliciting participation were mailed to past institute participants and potential projects.

Projects were typically ATE projects or NASA education sites whose funding coincided with the internship timeline.

Several factors were considered in the project/intern selection.

- Intern’s successful completion of summer institute
- Intern’s interests and preferences
- Distance between the intern and project was primary
  - To ease communication, coordination, and costs
  - To enable interns to spend most of their 80 hours working on evaluation rather than travel
Identification of Interns/Projects

- The most recent institute participants were given the first opportunity.

- Earlier institute participants were also eligible.

- A person could be an intern more than once.
Interns’ Evaluation Work (examples) 1

- Identify focus/scope of evaluation work in cooperation with collaborators (orientation)
- Identify/develop data collection instruments
- Prepare for and/or collect data
- Develop databases, data entry or data analysis (one or more of these)
- Conduct surveys, analyze and report findings
Interns’ Evaluation Work (examples) 2

- Conduct observations, analyze and report findings
- Conduct telephone and/or face-to-face interviews, analyze and report findings
- Conduct focus groups, analyze and report findings
- Develop feedback forms, analyze and report findings