



**STRATEGIC
EVALUATIONS** INC.

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**NCWORKS
COMMISSION**

**LOCAL
INNOVATION
COMMITTEE**

**WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT
BOARD (WDB)**

BUILDING HOPE

**3RD PARTY
EVALUATOR
MIDTERM
REPORT**

Executive Summary

The NCWorks Building Hope program, funded by a \$225,000 grant, aims to support underemployed women and non-binary individuals in Wake, Orange, and Chatham counties by providing job readiness training, hands-on internships, and career development in the construction industry. Our external evaluation, commissioned in May 2024, applies an Outcome Mapping approach to assess early program impacts, implementation processes, and sustainable development strategies. The evaluation also incorporates a participatory model, fostering capacity-building within the program team to ensure continuity in assessment practices beyond the evaluation period.

Key Findings

Participant Engagement and Skill Development – Overall, participants have shown positive engagement with the Building Hope program, particularly valuing the hands-on experience and the skills gained through structured training and internships. Early results indicate that the program's training components are building practical job skills and confidence, key factors in participants' readiness for entry-level roles in the construction field.

Workforce Shortage and Employer Partnerships – The program has made strides in addressing workforce shortages by securing employer partnerships and facilitating direct work-based learning experiences. Although four employers have been recruited, reaching the program's target of five employer partnerships remains a priority to ensure more robust post-program job opportunities for participants.

Confidence-Building in a Male-Dominated Industry – Preliminary, internally collected feedback from participants suggests an increase in self-confidence as they engage in a traditionally male-dominated field. This confidence-building appears crucial for participants' persistence and long-term success in construction, although continued support may be necessary to sustain this progress.

Evaluation Limitations

Timing and process-related factors have presented limitations in this evaluation. Although program funding began in 2023, evaluation activities did not commence until one year later, which has constrained the timeframe available for formative assessments. Additionally, the participatory evaluation model, aimed at aligning with program culture and avoiding redundancies, initially slowed tool development and limited access to internal resources. Consequently, this mid-term evaluation offers a foundational view, with further impacts to be assessed as the project concludes in June 2025.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

Moving forward, program leaders are encouraged to:

- **Enhance recruitment efforts** by implementing targeted outreach to engage underemployed women and non-binary individuals more effectively.
- **Strengthen employer partnerships** by proactively reaching out to new companies to broaden work-based learning and employment options.
- **Provide flexible case management support** to accommodate participants facing personal and logistical barriers to completion.

This mid-term evaluation underscores the Building Hope program's potential to build lasting pathways for opportunity youth. As the program progresses, the evaluation team will refine insights on these early impacts, providing a comprehensive assessment upon program completion.

1. Introduction

The Commission awarded funds to two grantees (Local Innovation Funds). Both of the grantees are North Carolina Workforce Development Boards (WDB). The two fund grantees are: Capital Area WDB / Hope Renovations and Western Piedmont WDB / OPT-IN and J.E.T. (Opportunity Internship and Jobs, Education, & Training).

1.1 Evaluation Context, Purpose, and Scope

As stated in the Invitation for Bid #: 43-1365-23...

This 3rd Party Evaluator shall review the work done with the money that each WDB received and determine if the funds used did in-fact improve the employment services that are being offered in the areas of North Carolina where those 2 WDB operate. If it is determined that the processes implemented in those 2 areas did work, then NCWorks will consider awarding future grants to other Workforce Development Boards across North Carolina to hopefully improve the services of workforce development that is being offered to citizens in other areas within North Carolina by replicating these innovative ideas across the state.

The scope of the external evaluation is four-fold: (1) to address the extent to which the Building Hope program is meeting stated outcomes; (2) to identify challenges and suggest solutions around these challenges; (3) to search for statistical correlations between program components and outcomes; and (4) to strengthen capacity and develop evaluation tools and mechanisms that are able to be internally sustained beyond the time the external evaluation team is involved.

1.2 Evaluation Methodology

Our evaluation methodology for this impact evaluation primarily follows an Outcome Mapping approach, designed to explore and clarify the program's theory of change. This approach enables us to systematically gather data on immediate, foundational changes that serve as precursors to more transformative impacts, while also assessing the program's contributions to the broader goals and outcomes of its stakeholders.

Additionally, our methodology incorporates a participatory and empowering approach, engaging the Building Hope leaders in the decision-making processes of the evaluation. This involvement not only enriches the evaluation with insights from project leaders but also builds their capacity for ongoing monitoring and assessment, potentially reducing the need for future external evaluation resources from the NCWorks Commission.

The evaluation is conducted by a team of four, comprising two senior and two junior team members. One senior-junior pair primarily supports the Building Hope evaluation efforts, while another senior-junior pair supports the similarly funded grantee (OPT-IN and J.E.T.). To ensure cohesive insights and continuity, the two sets of senior-junior pairs collaborate closely, sharing notes and findings to facilitate flexibility and interchangeability in evaluation responsibilities as needed.

2. Background

2.1 Building Hope Goals, Activities, and Audiences

As stated in the Invitation for Bid #: 43-1365-23...

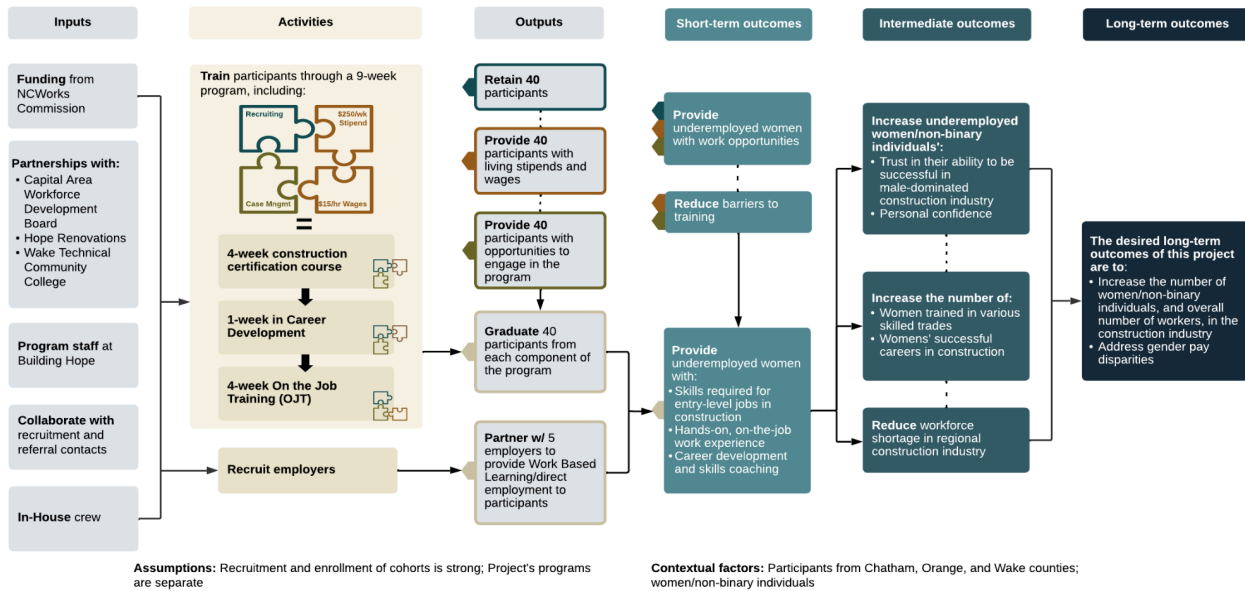
Building Hope - Preparing Gender Minorities for Careers in Construction (Chatham, Orange, and Wake counties) - A \$225,000 grant was awarded to help address both a critical need for workers in the construction industry and gender pay disparities by increasing the number of women trained in various skilled trades. A Chapel Hill-based nonprofit organization, Hope Renovations, provides pre-apprenticeship training in construction trades, case management to help resolve employment barriers like childcare, internships, and additional coaching services to help women succeed on the job. This grant will allow Hope Renovations to expand services beyond Orange County and support the training of approximately 40 participants. Partners include Capital Area Workforce Development Board, Hope Renovations and Wake Technical Community College.

As part of the external evaluation team, our work began with drafting an evaluation logic model to provide a foundational structure for assessing the Building Hope program. This initial phase focused on mapping the inputs, activities, outputs, and anticipated outcomes of the program, setting the stage for a focused evaluation strategy. [A current version of the logic model is pasted below and also viewable at a larger scale at this link.](#)

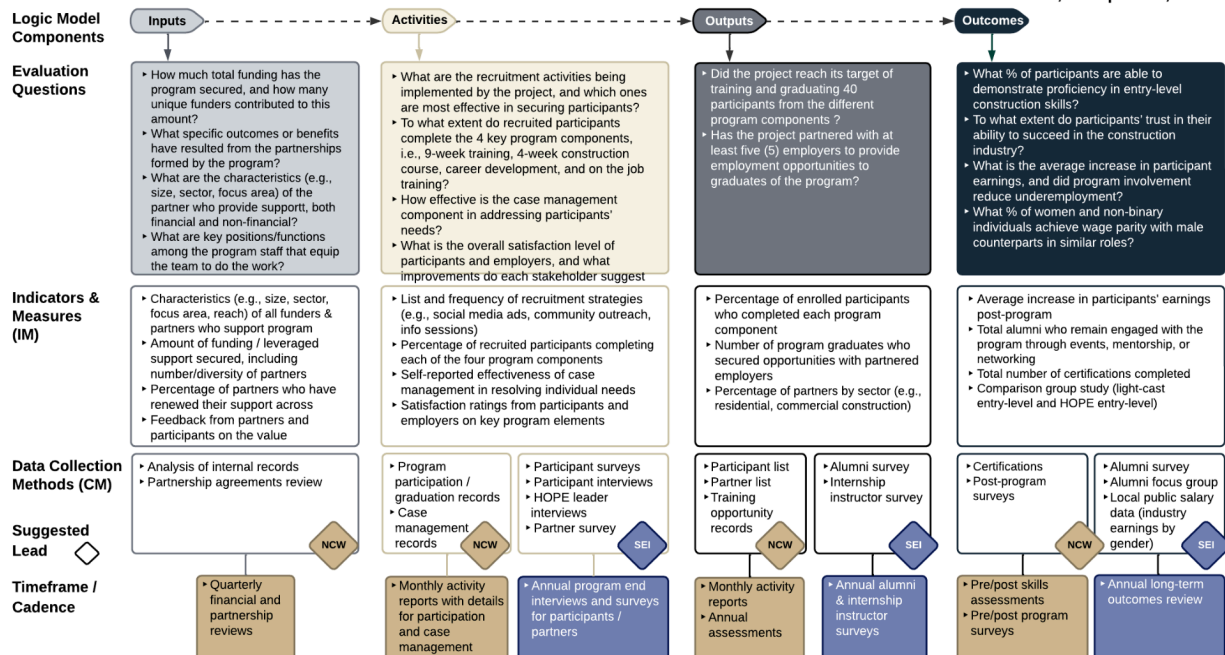
3. Evaluation Questions

Following the development of the logic model, the external evaluation team developed a broader evaluation framework. This framework incorporates 2–3 key evaluation questions for each logic model component that serve as guides for the data collection and analysis. [Similarly, a current version of the evaluation framework is pasted below and also viewable at a larger scale via this link.](#)

NC WORKS: BUILDING HOPE LOGIC MODEL
STRATEGIC EVALUATIONS, INC. | Nov 8, 2024



NC WORKS: BUILDING HOPE EVALUATION FRAMEWORK
STRATEGIC EVALUATIONS, INC. | Nov 8, 2024



The evaluation questions for each section are aligned with the logic model components based on the provided framework and are presented below, as well as in the figure above.

3.1 Evaluation Questions Aligned with Logic Model Inputs

- How much total funding has the program secured, and how many unique funders contributed to this amount?
- What specific outcomes or benefits have resulted from the partnerships formed by the program?
- What are the characteristics (e.g., size, sector, focus area) of the partners who provide support, both financial and non-financial?
- What are key positions/functions among the program staff that equip the team to do the work?

3.2 Evaluation Questions Aligned with Logic Model Activities

- What are the recruitment activities being implemented by the project, and which ones are most effective in securing participants?
- To what extent do recruited participants complete the 4 key program components, i.e., 9-week training, 4-week construction course, career development, and on-the-job training?
- How effective is the case management component in addressing participants' needs?
- What is the overall satisfaction level of participants and employers, and what improvements do each stakeholder suggest?

3.3 Evaluation Questions Aligned with Logic Model Outputs

- Did the project reach its target of training and graduating 40 participants from the different program components?
- Has the project partnered with at least five (5) employers to provide employment opportunities to graduates of the program?

3.4 Evaluation Questions Aligned with Logic Model Outcomes

- What % of participants are able to demonstrate proficiency in entry-level construction skills?
- To what extent do participants' trust in their ability to succeed in the construction industry?
- What is the average increase in participant earnings, and did program involvement reduce underemployment?
- What % of women and non-binary individuals achieve wage parity with male counterparts in similar roles?

4. Methodology

Within the evaluation framework, we also specified indicators and measures for each evaluation question, outlined appropriate data collection methods, recommended timeframes and cadence for data collection activities, and clarified responsibilities between the internal program leaders and our external team. To refine these elements, we held a one-hour work session with project

leaders. During the work session, both teams collaborated to adjust the evaluation questions to ensure alignment with program goals and operational context. Lastly, the team discussed feasibility and agreed on the timing, and responsible party for each data collection effort. Below are additional details on the methodology that will guide the approach for evaluating the program's progress and impacts.

4.1 Sampling Strategy and Priorities

Given the nature of our role as external evaluators of the Building Hope program, our sampling strategy looks to prioritize comprehensive data collection across stakeholder groups. Our approach centers on representativeness, aiming to capture insights from the full range of participants within this relatively small-scale program. Consequently, we seek data from all involved students and internship/employer partners, allowing us to capture diverse perspectives across the program's primary stakeholders. Our current sampling prioritizes individuals directly engaged in the most recent internships, specifically the latest graduates and the internship partners who served as hosts.

One limitation to our sampling strategy and priorities is the lack of externally collected data from training facilitators, whose perspectives may enhance the evaluation by shedding light on professional development/training outcomes. While we are in the early stages of data collection and no adjustments have been made to the strategy, we are considering including facilitator insights in future phases, if the program outcomes suggest their relevance to participant success and budget allows.

4.2 Data Collection Methods & Sources

The evaluation strategy for the Building Hope program employs a comprehensive mix of data collection methods designed to capture both quantitative and qualitative insights into program outcomes, participant satisfaction, and overall impact. These methods target a range of stakeholders, including program participants, internship hosts, program administrators, and local industry sources, providing a broad foundation for assessing the program's effectiveness and areas for improvement.

- **Internal Records Analysis:** Review of internal documents to track resource allocation, partnership engagement, and program implementation details.
- **Partnership Agreements Review:** Examination of formal agreements with partners to assess contributions, roles, and commitments.
- **Program Participation/Graduation Records:** Collection of data on participant enrollment, attendance, and graduation rates to monitor program engagement and completion.
- **Case Management Records:** Analysis of records documenting individual participant support needs and case management services provided throughout the program.
- **Participant Surveys:** Quantitative and qualitative surveys administered to participants to gather feedback on their experiences and satisfaction with the program.

- **Participant Interviews:** One-on-one discussions with participants to gain in-depth insights into their experiences, challenges, and program impact.
- **Post Skills Assessments/Certification Results:** Evaluation of participants' skills after the program to measure skill acquisition and development.
- **Pre/Post Program Surveys:** Surveys conducted before and after program participation to track changes in participants' perceptions, confidence, and readiness.
- **HOPE Leader Interviews:** Interviews with program leaders to capture their insights on program implementation, challenges, and areas for improvement.
- **Partner Surveys:** Surveys distributed to program partners to assess their satisfaction, engagement, and feedback on program outcomes.
- **Internship Instructor Surveys:** Feedback from instructors and employers hosting internships to evaluate participant performance and program preparedness.
- **Alumni Surveys:** Follow-up surveys with program graduates to understand long-term outcomes and ongoing engagement with the field.
- **Alumni Focus Groups:** Group discussions with alumni to explore their experiences post-program and gather insights on long-term career impacts.
- **Local Public Salary Data (Industry Earnings by Gender):** Analysis of local salary data by gender to assess potential impacts on earnings and wage parity among program alumni.
- **Comparison Group Study:** A study comparing program participants to a similar group not in the program to evaluate relative success and impact on career progression.

4.3 Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis techniques employed in this evaluation are designed to provide a rigorous assessment of program impacts and identify areas for improvement across key outcomes.

- **Quantitative Analysis:** Survey data and program records will undergo quantitative analysis to calculate employment rates, wage changes, and retention percentages among program participants. Descriptive and inferential statistics are employed to draw comparisons across participant cohorts and assess any significant economic impacts.
- **Thematic Analysis:** Interview data from participants, employers, and program administrators will be analyzed thematically to identify common experiences, challenges, and recommendations. This qualitative approach will ensure that nuanced feedback is integrated into the evaluation, especially regarding mentorship quality and skill acquisition.
- **Comparative Analysis:** Data from alumni and employer surveys are compared annually to observe trends in employment retention, wage growth, and continued program engagement. Cross-year comparisons of public economic indicators with participant outcomes further strengthen insights into the program's broader community impact.

5. Findings

Below are key preliminary findings, organized by logic model component and evaluation question. It is worth noting that in most cases the evaluation questions within the logic model have a summative lens. Given that our work is in the early stages, we are establishing a plan to answer all summative questions in the final report. For now, we include findings from our formative work to date and/or the agreed upon plan for answering the questions in the future.

5.1 Findings Aligned with Logic Model Inputs

Question: How much total funding has the program secured, and how many unique funders contributed to this amount?

- **Answer:** No evidence found in this report.

Question: What specific outcomes or benefits have resulted from the partnerships formed by the program?

- **Answer:** Fifteen employers attended a workshop/event, indicating active partnership engagement, but specific outcomes or benefits are not provided.

Question: What are the characteristics (e.g., size, sector, focus area) of the partners who provide support, both financial and non-financial?

- **Answer:** No evidence found in this report.

Question: What are key positions/functions among the program staff that equip the team to do the work?

- **Answer:** No evidence found in this report.

5.2 Findings Aligned with Logic Model Activities

Question: *What are the recruitment activities being implemented by the project, and which ones are most effective in securing participants?*

- **Answer:** *Recruitment is cited as an ongoing issue, with Hope Renovations and CAWD continuing to strategize on recruitment and enrollment. Specific recruitment activities are not detailed.*

Question: *To what extent do recruited participants complete the 4 key program components, i.e., 9-week training, 4-week construction course, career development, and on-the-job training?*

- **Answer:** *Two participants completed the on-the-job internship component, and three completed the Career Development Program. No participants completed all four key components during this reporting period.*

Question: *How effective is the case management component in addressing participants' needs?*

- **Answer:** *No evidence found in this report.*

Question: *What is the overall satisfaction level of participants and employers, and what improvements do each stakeholder suggest?*

- **Answer:** *No evidence found in this report.*

5.3 Findings Aligned with Logic Model Outputs

Question: Did the project reach its target of training and graduating 40 participants from the different program components?

- **Answer:** As of this report, nine participants have been served cumulatively, indicating that the program is still progressing toward its target but has not yet reached the goal of 40 graduates.

Question: Has the project partnered with at least five (5) employers to provide employment opportunities to graduates of the program?

- **Answer:** No employers have been recruited for work-based learning or direct employment at this stage.

5.4 Findings Aligned with Logic Model Outcomes

Question: *What % of participants are able to demonstrate proficiency in entry-level construction skills?*

- **Answer:** *No evidence found in this report.*

Question: *To what extent do participants' trust in their ability to succeed in the construction industry?*

- **Answer:** *One participant reported increased personal confidence, showing preliminary evidence of improvement in self-trust.*

Question: *What is the average increase in participant earnings, and did program involvement reduce underemployment?*

- **Answer:** *No evidence found in this report regarding earnings or underemployment reduction.*

Question: *What % of women and non-binary individuals achieve wage parity with male counterparts in similar roles?*

- **Answer:** *No evidence found in this report.*

6. Conclusions

Based on the quarterly reports, the Building Hope program demonstrates initial progress in participant engagement and program component completion but faces challenges in reaching full enrollment and securing adequate recruitment. Specifically, while a total of 16 participants have engaged with the program, only a small number have completed each component, and recruitment remains a significant obstacle, with ongoing efforts needed to meet target goals. Additionally, participant feedback highlights emerging confidence and industry engagement, yet further data on long-term outcomes, such as job placement and wage parity, is not yet available. Continued monitoring and strategic adjustments in recruitment and employer partnerships will be essential to fully achieve program objectives and document long-term impact.

7. Recommendations

7.1 Participant Recommendations

[None collected to date by the external evaluation team]

7.2 Evaluator Recommendations

The section below contains recommendations directly from the evaluation team. While these recommendations may not have emerged explicitly from OPT-IN participants, the evaluation team offers them for consideration based on data and/or prior experience with similarly funded projects.

➤ **Enhance Recruitment Strategies:**

Collaborate with local community organizations, develop targeted outreach campaigns, and explore incentives for participants to address the recruitment challenges. Consider evaluating current recruitment methods to identify the most effective approaches and adjust strategies accordingly.

➤ **Increase Employer Engagement:**

Focus on building partnerships with a broader network of employers by hosting regular events and informational sessions to demonstrate the program's value. Strengthening employer connections may help secure work-based learning placements and direct job opportunities for graduates.

➤ **Provide Comprehensive Case Management**

Ensure consistent support for participants facing personal or logistical challenges, such as legal or medical issues, which have impacted program retention. This may involve

adding flexible support options, like on-demand case management, to help participants remain engaged and complete program components.

➤ **Track Long-Term Outcomes Systematically**

Begin gathering baseline data on participant earnings, employment status, and wage parity to evaluate the program's impact on reducing underemployment and achieving wage equity over time. Regularly updating this data will provide a more robust picture of the program's effectiveness and areas needing improvement.

8. Lessons Learned

The lessons learned were developed by synthesizing data from the quarterly reports, analyzing patterns in participant experiences, program challenges, and observed preliminary outcomes. Here's a breakdown of the process:

- **Identifying Recurring Challenges:** Both quarterly reports mention issues with participant retention and recruitment, with specifics such as personal challenges (e.g., legal and medical issues) affecting attendance and completion. This pointed to a need for greater flexibility and support in these areas. The recurring nature of these challenges across cohorts may signal a structural issue rather than isolated cases, leading to the first lesson on the need for adaptable support systems.
- **Assessing Employer Engagement Data:** The quarterly reports consistently highlight the involvement of employers, particularly in workshops and events, even though formal employment partnerships have not fully reached the target. This suggested that employer interest exists, but more structured, proactive engagement could yield better job placement outcomes. This observation was the basis for the second lesson, emphasizing the importance of early and strategic employer engagement.
- **Examining Recruitment Insights:** Both reports discuss recruitment as a persistent challenge. The limited success in recruiting underemployed women and non-binary individuals suggests that conventional outreach may not resonate with the target demographic. This observation led to the third lesson: the need for targeted, possibly unconventional, recruitment approaches that speak directly to the unique needs and potential hesitations of this group.

9. Limitations

9.1 Limitations due to Time

The primary limitation in this evaluation stems from the timing of our involvement as external evaluators. Although the Building Hope project began receiving funding in 2023, our contract to conduct evaluation work was not established until May 2024, approximately one year into the program's implementation. This delayed start has constrained our ability to fully address many evaluation questions within the initial 6-month assessment period. Additionally, with the project set to end in June 2025, several components are only now beginning to gather and organize summative impact data. These timing constraints limit the comprehensiveness of findings at this stage and underscore the importance of continued data collection to fully capture the program's outcomes.

9.2 Limitations due to Evaluation Process

The collaborative nature of our evaluation process has also presented a limitation. As a new external partner with the Building Hope team, we adopted a participatory approach to develop tools and frameworks, which has extended development timelines. This approach, designed to align with the program's culture and avoid redundant efforts, initially restricted access to resources such as internal data and visual materials. During this period, we focused on securing permissions and establishing collaborative agreements, which limited the availability of images for this mid-term report. However, we do not anticipate this limitation continuing, as we have now received permission to use project photos and established an agreement to capture non-people images during future visits.

About SEI

Strategic Evaluations, Inc. (SEI) has served as the 3rd party evaluator for the NCWorks Commission Workforce Development Board (WDB) Local Innovation Committee since May 2024. SEI is a HUB-certified, minority-owned evaluation consulting firm located in Durham, North Carolina. For more than 20 years we have helped organizations and institutions apply for, win, and sustain funding for science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and medicine (STEMM) grants. Our team specializes in designing, reviewing, and implementing rigorous evaluation efforts for STEMM education initiatives. The team's current work includes the evaluation of state, federal, and privately funded projects designed to enhance the performance, capability, and career trajectories for trainees ranging from high school to postdoctoral/early career level. These training initiatives often span several years and are housed at a range of institutions and organizations, including large state and private institutions of higher education, small liberal arts colleges, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and science professional societies.