

EVALUATION

Evaluation Plan

The evaluation plan that was included in the original NCLVI proposal is included in Appendix E of this Briefing Book. Evaluation is integral to the design of NCLVI. Incorporated into the program design is the evaluation of the collaborative itself. Quantitative performance measures include number of leadership personnel prepared, ratings of the enrichment activities, and number of leadership personnel taking positions in leadership positions. Qualitative data include Fellows' satisfaction levels with their preparation and with the enrichment activities and the consortium members' satisfaction with the process of working together in this collaborative effort.

Evaluation tools include the Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory, which measures the perceptions of collaboration held by members of the collaborative. This inventory is a practical tool utilizing twenty factors that research has shown influence success of collaboratives (see Appendix F). Survey instruments have been designed to collect data from consortium members and from Public Advisory Committee members. Current and past doctoral students (non-Fellows) will complete surveys which will contribute to the evaluation of the impact of the program on Fellows, both their preparation and their products.

Evaluation results of the developing project are available on the NCLVI website and will be published as part of the dissemination.

An external evaluator has contributed the external evaluation plan focused on the products and outcomes of the project (see Appendix G). This plan draws heavily on the evaluation plan contained in the original proposal, thus validating the original plan. The development of the external evaluation plan and review of the evaluation plan as proposed was another goal of the first year of the project.

Major Findings/Outcomes

The first year of the project was to be a planning year and in that year the collaborative needed to be established with working procedures and guidelines. As can be seen in the section "Activities and Accomplishments," the project activities which needed to occur in year one have been accomplished, with only a few remaining activities to occur during the final four months of the first year of the project. These activities include preparing the individual contracts with the consortium member universities that will be receiving Fellows. At the initial meeting of the Consortium, PCO staff from the Vice-President for Financial Affairs and Sponsored Programs met with the Consortium members to discuss

what they believed to be critical elements to be included in the contracts. Each contract will include the amount of tuition and stipend that the NCLVI Fellow is to receive and stipulations related to OSEP payback agreements for the funds. Contracts will be individually negotiated, since there will be so few institutions with which we need to develop contracts. For year one, 14 Fellows are distributed among 8 universities (some consortium members were not accepting doctoral students in this first year and some universities received more than one Fellow).

At an initial meeting with OSEP personnel, NCLVI staff members were directed to modify the numbers of Fellows originally proposed to include more Fellows in the first and second cohorts; to eliminate any additional cohorts; and to extend the number of years in the programs of these Fellows from three to four. The recommended numbers were 15 in the first cohort and 10 in the second. Despite the short time from dissemination of information about the project to accepting applicants for fellowships, the project was able to fill the first cohort of 14. Staff anticipate no difficulty in filling the second cohort and, in fact, anticipate more applications for the second cohort considering some applications for the second cohort have already been received, some are in process, many inquires have been filed, and all 14 Consortium Universities will be accepting doctoral students to begin studies in the 2006-2007 academic year.

Perhaps the most important outcome at this point in the project is the NCLVI University Consortium itself and the collaboration that has been demonstrated both by the University Consortium and PAC efforts thus far. At the first University Consortium meeting, members developed the guiding principles under which they would operate. Members recognized that their institution might not receive Fellows and indicated that they were still willing to participate in the enrichment activities, recognizing the benefits of their participation to the entire field. In evaluating the cohesiveness of the consortium, NCLVI staff requested that the University Consortium members complete the Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory. The survey questions and the results as completed prior to the beginning of the project are included in Appendix F.

Summative results show a collaborative that is still in the beginning stages of working together cooperatively, but with a strong sense of shared vision and unique purpose which members see as in their own self-interest. Members also feel strongly that the goals and objectives are concrete and obtainable and that the leadership of the consortium is skilled and able to operate in the political and social climate, which is seen as favorable to the collaborative effort. The Wilder will be administered again at the end of each year of the project to determine progress in working collaboratively.

Evidence of Project Effectiveness

The effectiveness of the project will not entirely be shown until the NCLVI Fellows have graduated and are filling leadership positions in the field. However, evidence that points to the potential success of the project comes from the accomplishments thus far. To have hired the project staff; to have designed, built, and furnished a suite of offices for the project; to have convened a meeting of the 14 member University Consortium that represents all the programs which currently provide doctoral training in the area of Visual Impairment; to have convened a meeting of the Public Advisory Committee consisting of members from diverse groups (many of whom have a history of lack of cooperation with each other, but who are unified in supporting the goals of the NCLVI); to have convened an unplanned joint meeting of the Consortium and PAC members at which the Enrichment Plan for the Fellows was fleshed out; to have announced the existence of the NCLVI Fellowships and had the large response (over 90 inquiries in this first year alone); to have developed the application materials as well as the rubric for ranking applicants; to have developed the competencies and activities of the Enrichment Plan; to have received the applications for fellowships, convened the Application Review Committee, and ranked the candidates; and to have already accepted the first cohort of 14 Fellows to begin in the fall of 2005 demonstrates that the project is on target with its goals and objectives.

Evidence of Target Audience Satisfaction

The NCLVI Fellows and the greater Blindness/Visual Impairment Leadership Community are the main target audiences for the project. NCLVI Fellows have only just been selected and therefore cannot really demonstrate their satisfaction at this point, except that they have all indicated their pleasure in being accepted into the program and are excited about receiving the fellowship support and being part of the first cohort. During the phone calls informing them of their awards, several candidates remarked about their tremendous satisfaction with how quickly NCLVI was able to disseminate information about the project, develop an application process, and select Fellows. Because of the timeliness of the awards, Fellows are able to make the necessary arrangements to adjust their living situations enabling them to begin their studies only a few months from now.

The greater Blindness/Visual Impairment Leadership Community, however, has participated in several meetings since the establishment of the NCLVI. At the conclusion of each meeting, NCLVI staff ask attendees to evaluate the meeting and determine their satisfaction with the process and products. These evaluations are in Appendix H and demonstrate participants' general satisfaction with the meetings and with what has been accomplished through the meetings. In addition, at each meeting, we have a "check in, check out" procedure where participants indicate their concerns or satisfaction with the state

of the project thus far. The vast majority of these comments have provided an indication that participants are more than satisfied with the process and are truly excited about the Consortium efforts and its potential impact on the field. In a few instances the comments have raised issues that were subsequently addressed by the University Consortium or the PAC and which added to the proceedings of the meetings. Minutes of the meeting are detailed, and include discussions as well as action items. They provide documentation of the work of the collaborative in overcoming obstacles and achieving consensus. The minutes of the meetings thus far total 68 pages, and are contained in a binder which will be available for review at the 1 + 4 meeting.

Discussion of Progress toward OSEP priorities delineated in the RFA

As mentioned earlier in this Briefing Book, the NCLVI proposal was developed outside of the traditional OSEP RFA process as an unsolicited proposal.