Linked Learning Regional Hubs Information Sharing Approach

July 2016

Background: The evaluation team is conducting a developmental evaluation (DE) of the Linked Learning Regional Hubs of Excellence initiative for The James Irvine Foundation. DE is well suited for initiatives that are highly innovative, in the early stages of development, and/or occur in complex shifting environments. These are all characteristics embodied in the regional hubs initiative. At the heart of developmental evaluation is a focus on *learning from implementation* and capitalizing on *early opportunities* to support an initiative's success. To date, the evaluation team, initiative intermediary Jobs for the Future (JFF), and the Irvine Foundation have engaged in multiple discussions and opportunities to share about the evolution of the regional hubs initiative. Periodic calls have focused on team updates, evaluation memos, and feedback on instruments and program documents, among other salient topics. We have also dedicated time for in-person communication and reflection during day-long reflection sessions.

Objective: The evaluation team seeks to create a transparent information sharing approach that clarifies what, how, and with whom information will be shared. Together, with the key stakeholders in this initiative—the Irvine Foundation, JFF, anchor organizations and their partners—we also hope to create opportunities to exchange insights on implementation of the initiative and to engage in collective sense-making.

Evaluation Role in the Regional Hubs Initiative

- **To help tell the narrative of this initiative**. Our methods are primarily qualitative and rely on asking powerful questions and receiving valid information. Everyone we speak with helps us develop that narrative. We attempt to strike a neutral tone, and we hope to present useful observations and/or findings to the Irvine Foundation and JFF as primary audiences. We expect to share our observations and findings with anchors and their partners to support their learning in ways that do not interfere with technical assistance provision.

- **To be a thought partner in this work**. We will share and integrate our knowledge and perspectives along the way with that of JFF and the Irvine Foundation to strengthen understanding about how the initiative is evolving and to inform strategy moving forward. We respect the complexity of this work, and will never claim to have "the final answer" to any particular aspect of the work, but hope to share our best thinking and engage in discussions that help us reach a shared understanding of the work.

- **To be flexible and adaptive**. We recognize the complexity of the initiative and that there are many unknowns. Partnerships in the field are new and growing, as is the partnership between the Irvine Foundation, JFF, and the evaluation team. We are prepared to adapt and be flexible with our communication approach to the extent our capacity and resources allow, and we understand that our role as the evaluation partner is also in development.

Parameters and Principles for Sharing Information

- **Confidentiality**. We honor confidentiality and avoid information sharing that might compromise trust that sites, communities, JFF, or the Irvine Foundation has placed in us.

- **Reflection**. We attempt to avoid coming to premature conclusions and recognize the value of stepping back and looking across all sites with our evaluation team before making broader evaluative judgments. We share and vet data with the rest of the evaluation team or some subset of the team before sharing it out. We will pose questions to the Irvine Foundation and JFF that prompt reflection and consideration of multiple perspectives.

- **Humility**. We are humble as researchers—we only see "slices" of what's happening and may not have all the context needed to make a strong assessment or recommendation. We see "hard" data collection, like interviews and surveys, as more reliable sources of themes and findings than "soft" data collection events, like meeting observations. The level of rigor in our data collection and analysis influences our openness and willingness to share conclusions beyond the evaluation team.

- **Utility**. We strive to share information that adds value—that is useful, well-supported, reflective of themes, timely, and has the potential to influence thinking and practice.

- **Efficiency**. We hope to leverage existing meetings to share information and engage in productive dialogue to reduce the burden placed on the Irvine Foundation, JFF, the anchors, and their partners.