Carol Kochlar-Bryant Zoom Audio

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**SPEAKERS**

Carol K

**Carol K** 00:00

It's great to be here. And and and to put faces to people I've talked to on the phone and also seen on Zoom, but I get to see in person. So this is this is terrific for me. Great to see you in person, I want to just talk for just a minute or so about evaluation and kind of how I see evaluation. I've been doing this for 40 years, and grown a great deal with it. Most of my evaluation activities have been with technical assistance centers and with community, both small and large, community based organizations, local and state and national. And I've learned a heck of a lot. When I began to work with Amy, it was the human centered design process that excited me the most. And I wanted to connect with it, and have been working now for for five years in the fifth year. And these, the community based grants are the most exciting part of what of what I do, you know, as Amy had said to as an evaluator, they are the richest, most interesting and exciting elements to the work that I do. When Amy asked me to speak, I said, Do you? Do they really want to hear from an evaluator just before lunch especially? She said yes, they do. Evaluators often have bad reputations. They can be called bean counters or data mongers and a heck of a lot worse that I've heard. I do count numbers, some of them you see on the table there and some of the things that have been presented. So I have to count numbers, of course, the quantitative stuff, such as ncmm subscribers, the tools and resources that they produce the technical assistance provided. That's the quantitative stuff. It's all interesting. But as an evaluator, I learned long ago, that there's another side to this a really rewarding side. So I needed to look behind the numbers, look under the hood of these programs. And that is really where the value the valuable information is. In terms of ncnm we needed to ask questions such as you know, looking beyond the accomplishments and the targets in the statement of work? How does scmm make a difference in the field? How does ncmm touch the lives of communities and individuals, the qualitative stuff? And that often gets overlooked by evaluators? When they're in the weeds of the quantitative the numbers? How do we show that a difference is happening out there in the community? I want to I'm here to talk about the community demonstration grants, not just the numbers such as the numbers of rides, number of miles. What I've what I really learned in year one of working with ncmm on these community grants was that we had living laboratories for learning these community demonstration grants or living laboratories that we can learn so much from beyond well beyond the counting the bean counting of how many miles how many riders, all of that is very, very important. And FDA has its standards in terms of data reporting. But we can go deeper and we can really learn so much using these living laboratories. Because each one of them as Amy had mentioned, 100% of the grants have produced first of its kind projects in the communities where they have germinated where the fires have been started. All each one of these grants have produced first of its kind ever in these communities. Which means the for the first time giving seniors people with disabilities everyone access to their communities and connecting them with their communities and with life and with their own with health. ncmm understood this all along, that we needed to learn from these experiences and grow together. That is how we can grow together. So this is why this has been the most interesting part of my portfolio. We need to go deeper into an understanding of how these projects get seated and how they get launched. But what happens between that first gathering of a team that decides it wants to participate in the community demonstration projects. What happens between the first team meeting and the outcomes down the road after that first phase, second phase, third phase, and so on the outcomes that we can measure what happened in that process between A and B, that's what we call anybody know what that's called? that sort of empty space that we often overlook. It's called the Black Box. They heard about that heard that term, the black box. It's a research term, it's an evaluation term. It's that black box, what we don't know between the beginning of a project and the outcomes that we can measure. And if we don't look carefully under the hood, we've missed so much of the lessons and of what we can learn of what the grantees can tell us, we don't capture that information. So the question is, how do these small inspired ideas generated by people like you, you know, who often knew for years what your community needed? At but how do you turn that into a spark? How do you turn that into a movement, and I have seen and from talking to many of you, that those small sparks have become crusades, they have become movements because of your effort. To the more we can learn from this process, not just measuring the performance, measure the outcomes, but the process that we can share with others across the country, and support the capacity. Okay, let me try to go quickly as we can, because I know lunch is coming up and we have one more presentation beforehand. So NCMM is capacity building measures. How does NCMM do what it does? Well, there are five broad areas of NCMM builds capacity, supporting FTA and CCAM. Agencies in cross sector partnerships, delivering targeted and intensive TA building capacity for for, for networking, coordination networks, and implementing demonstration grant and that's what I want to focus on a little bit. And this as I said, this is the most important part, most exciting part of my portfolio anyway.

**Carol K** 07:24

But NCMM does more than just just fund manage and collect data. It recognize it that there's a really a value in learning from these living laboratories. Together, we've kind of we kind of express evaluation, I kind of think of valuation in terms of a learning circle cycle.

**Carol K** 07:52

The HCD, the human centered design process. Kind of makes me think about a poem from a French poet Guillaume Apollinaire, and maybe you've heard this poem, but it's it goes, and it's just reflects, it's a good metaphor for the HCD process. And it goes, come to the edge. We can't we're, we're afraid, we're afraid we're going to fall, come to the edge. And so they came. And he pushed them, and they flew. I love that poem. And I think it's appropriate here. So where's the evidence? We're making a difference? We say NCMM makes a difference. Where is that evidence? How does NCMM do what it does and create ripples across communities and across the nation. We studied former grantees, as Amy said, there were 69. Total grantees, we have studied at a number of ways we did interviews with the grantee teams and leaders. We looked at operational plans that they produce monthly and final reports, both qualitative and quantitative performance data, and surveys of customers that they served, and feedback on the project services.

**Carol K** 09:25

We looked at themes, all those interviews, all that data, we had to make some sense of it, that's kind of my job is to collect as much as I can, most importantly, from the grantee teams themselves, and secondarily, from the customers that they have served those. That's the most important data. I can certainly look at reports and documents and so on, but it's hearing from those teams and the struggles that they bore, and then the customers that they've served. So the themes that you're defining us meant that it had to be a common occurrence or report from each of the projects. It had to represent a key lesson that was learned by that project. And it had to provide an insight into how they made a difference in their communities. And fourthly, it had to have implications for NCMM. Practice. So those were the four those four conditions that made it a theme that I could pull out. Okay, and, and represent, we came up with about 15 themes and have reduced it to about nine that are present quickly. Those themes were important because they represent, the more we understand about that process, okay, we could learn how to accelerate that process, which meant, what does acceleration really mean? It has the potential to better prepare these grantees from the beginning to do their planning, to prepare for implementation, to build teams, to figure out the best partners, to engage those partners to generate commitment from those partners, and to sustain those partners. Because without that commitment from those cross sector partners that were the key to the success of these projects, they weren't going to be sustained. So it's very complex kind of a process, the more we understand it, perhaps we can accelerate it, we can do better, of course, they're doing a great job, we can always do better, but maybe we could accelerate it and deepen the outcomes. And they can survive and thrive. So theme one, and I'm gonna go through these fairly quickly, because I know we're, we're kind of pressed for time. Some of these may seem very obvious to you. And some of you may have even said these things they want to talk with and get to know the people you will serve. Of course, that meant they told us, we solicited customer feedback all the way along, because customers help us discover the unknowns. Each of these projects is a journey. It's a journey into the unknown. Again, we're learning what it means for a team. It's never worked together before representing multiple agencies never worked together before. So for the first time, they represent that interconnection among those agencies, when we talk high level about CCAM. But this is where the rubber meets the road. And these folks get together for the first time ever. And they partner with with their customers usually have someone on the team, and those customers help them discover the unknown what works, what doesn't work with customers. So one team leader, I had to share some of these. Some of these comments we learned during focus groups, that we had to modify the sketch our schedules over time, we also learned that the smaller bus while nice for riders didn't have enough cargo space for them to carry loads of groceries. We knew we needed larger buses with more cargo space and ones that could carry more than 15 passengers. Through constant feedback. We also learned that for people with limited mobility, we had to pay close attention to accessibility. The stairs involved availability of ramps, obstacles to destinations once they got there. And they heard from their customers. They are the learning partners, customers or learning partners, number to forge strategic partnerships to blend and integrate services. We know this. But if we go deeper, we really need to know this. We need to know how it works. Yes, we need partners, but we need to know how it works not just how these teams, these partnerships formed, how do we sustain them? And when we asked all of the grantees, what is the most important factor in the success of your project? They said, partnerships, particularly across agencies, or sectors that we have never worked with before. So how did they do that? They told us that our partnerships have to represent all key stakeholders in making this work. Not just making this work for the duration of the phase that has been funded by ncnm. But we have to make it work. This is just a springboard. We have to make it work for the year for the next two years for the next five years. We have to share the operational work. We have to share the problem solving. All of this makes for stronger outcomes. And all of that builds sustainability. It was the partnerships and the commitment that builds sustainability. So what we learned from the grantees that partnerships are more much more than just a collection of those partners. When they're coordinating their separate services and roles, each partner had to think outside the box to some extent. So you have this team of partners all having to think outside the box, and perhaps hadn't been challenged to do that before. How do you make that work as the team leader on one of these grants. And each one of these teams, these grantees are working with first of their kind collaborate intersectoral collaborations among the mobility managers, the transportation professionals, health agency, social services, and so on, it is among the most complex kinds of collaborations that you could possibly work with. So how did those teams do it? Because as Amy said, 100% of these grantees that have been funded have resulted in first of its kind intersectoral collaborations. How did they do it? Look, how do we look under the hood?

**Carol K** 16:36

The partners told us one of the key when it when it comes to partnerships and sustainability, they told us, it's all about commitment. committed partners making a difference on committed partners, they kind of fall by the wayside, and we can't sustain them. And collaboration falls on a spectrum. You all know this, but collaboration falls on a spectrum, from those partners who are cheerleaders, and they'll stand behind you, and they'll rah rah all the way to most valuable players, where the partner is really, really formally engaged with, with the project, and has made a commitment to sustain all the way along. That's a, that's a committed partnership. And those were the key measures of success of any of these projects, was that commitment. So commitment, science, is really a thing. It's a thing. And we need to learn about how that how that happens. Theme three, be politically astute with your local leaders. And I'll just give you a quote. It's kind of captures it all. During the politics was important that people told us the teams told us in one project reported all of the mayor's showed up at our meetings because they were invited. And we fed them. They remained engaged and supported us throughout because they understood what we were doing. And they were essential for our expansion. theme for the pilot model serves as a springboard into the future. And therefore build in data gathering from the very start. So the successful projects and there are many, regularly evaluated their effectiveness. And they sought feedback from their stakeholders over the duration of the project. And they continued that they continue that habit beyond. But beyond the grant period. And this, this, this next point is really, really important for me as an evaluator, but it's also important for you all engaged with these startup projects. These inspirational project define and communicate the life changing nature of the work that you do, giving people real choices in their lives, to age in place, access, food security, access, medical and behavioral health and so on. Even making the difference between whether someone completes a course of treatment, whether it's health or behavioral health, making that difference. And we heard some of that from sound generations with ference presentation, making that difference. So they build data gathering into, into their design, into their planning into their implementation, and, very importantly, into their justification for sustained funding. That is the kind of data both the quantitative that you're required to do, but that process data about your journey and building that in to tell the story to potential funders. And several many of you have done exactly that and been very successful because your your future funders want to hear about the journey. They want to hear about what's made it successful, they want to look under the hood. So capturing that qualitative data on impacts, particularly in the highly remote communities. This was really kind of profound in many ways, whether it was highly remote communities where you're working from absolutely scrapped. From the absolute beginning, we there are no services, no Uber, no lift, no buses, and you're very far from an urban area or even suburban area. These are complex projects. Five, identify existing resources and plan for plan early for sustainability. To move beyond that patchwork of grants, it's often has to be put together. And include sustainability planning from the very beginning, that is part of the HCD process, human centered design process, it's built in to, as Amy mentioned, to the planning process, learn how others have integrated with the community. And particularly how others have replicated those ripples from the small startup, launch the learning launch in the pilot. And then how do you replicate it to surrounding communities? Six, make sure they know you're there. The team's told us make sure they know you're there prioritize that early marketing? Well, why is marketing so important? So that you can broaden your outreach to the target audience. remove obstacles to marketing. In some cases, we heard there was such complex processes to just getting anything work carried out there, just marketing materials was so difficult that we had to change our process. And we had to make sure that the marketing that you do that represents your project, your brand new service that you're going to initiate reflects the whole partnership, not just the lead agency. In some cases, we well, we had to learn the lead agency was marketing and reaching out, but no one else was reflected. You don't have all the stakeholders, they're reflected to communicate that you've got a shared project. Increase observability of what you're doing, and communicate all the way along to both your customers and your partners. Because often, the partners had to be reminded how they would be better off with this new service. The customer I'm sorry, the partners had to be reminded all the way along how this is better for them. Not just the cut the writers the customers.

**Carol K** 22:55

Theme seven recognize I'm sorry. Yeah, broaden the reach, engage new writers that have little experience with public transit. Many of them are fearful afraid, just don't have experience since they went to high school and on a high school bus. And one project, use the holiday season season to engage writers launching a Christmas shopping event, for example. But but many told us, we had to appreciate the fears and the anxieties that that that folks have theme seven. They told us how much they valued the on site visit to VMC mm staff. With the project teams told us we were very boosted by having ncnm team come on site to work with us. They contributed in ways. We only realized later on reflection. We're responsible for our continued motivation and resilience. It was amazing for ncnm staff to spend their time and come to us for that whole long week of training. Even though we're this little town in Idaho, they brought so many resources and gave us a week of their time during a blizzard working from Sun Sun up to sundown with a 45 minute drive to us from their hotel. They did everything they could to make sure that we felt comfortable moving forward. And the biggest thing that kept us going was knowing that we had outside people paying attention to help us and who really cared. This was a quote from one of those teams. Only then did we believe we could do this because of the intense technical assistance. And not only the technical assistance, but the human part of it. They cared enough. They cared enough and we knew then that these kinds Have inspirational projects, these kinds of first first of their kind project could happen anywhere. Even in small town like ours, it could happen anywhere. And that is exciting. I'm gonna go to theme eight document. And this is probably if I had to give this one a gold star, it's this one, it's document how you're making a difference in the community go beyond the numbers, document how you're making a difference for your immediate customers. And the lasting changes in the wider community document that those broader systemic changes. Because when I, when I came back and interview interview, the team, leaders and the teams after the particular phase of their project, and I would come back each phase, and I would ask them questions that they hadn't been asked and encouraging them to document broader systemic changes that are happening. Yes, they would, clearly they would capture the data about their particular individual project. But at the same time, ripples were happening as a result of that first learning launch, or that pilot ripples were already happening out in the community, with political changes, with policy changes with changes in the broader region, with mayors being involved with state leaders coming and sitting in on meetings at the local level and saying we need to do this at the state. We need to have transportation as a key as a key, a key element in our state plan that we haven't had before. Because they were invited and they came. And they learned how transportation is the key to connecting people to their communities. So so the team leader said we need to learn how to document those systemic changes in our infrastructure, and how and and those collaborative partnerships and how we made them sustained and how we drew in political support. And this is one of the last quote about making a difference teammate making a difference. This is a quote from one of the team members due to the system's change around us in a collective approach in our community to building capacity to address chance transportation, transportation has been named as one of four major sectors of focus in the Phillips county team before implementation of ncnm learning launch. During our community accelerator meetings, transportation was noted as a barrier to all resources in our community. Transportation was buried at all resources in our community. But many felt that it was just too out of reach for their organizations. After the learning launch, many organizations felt that not only was focusing their resources and efforts to address transportation necessary, but it was achievable. This love that quote. And theme nine, connect and engage with other pioneer providers from across the country. Of course, you're here. Thank you for being here. Because so many people, all of you are working on similar goals and visions, you're learning from one another. That's what you're here to do. And try to bring others in your teams and encourage others. And keep coming to the conferences and participate in elearning, and so on. And as I close, we just want to say as we reflect on these five years or so we want to continue to learn. We want to go deeper. To learn all we can about these success factors for these projects, particularly the cross sector partnerships, and how to build networks. We want to go back and learn about the scale ups. Because our teams are telling us our previous teams, projects are telling us we've done scale up, let's learn about what that scale up is all about. Because it truly is the wider impact the ripples that are happening across the country. And we want to also go deeper and understand the impacts of these projects on the lives of people and communities. The more we learn the more we can expand our contribution in general mobility management for people and communities as as you are doing. So thank you for making a difference. I have learned so much over these past five years from Amy from me and from all of you, it's just been really very exciting. And I don't think it's an overstatement to say I'm gonna just say this and people say like you're overstating things. No, it's not an overstatement to say that our future really depends on all that you people do to connect people, to their communities and to the world. We really do. Don't forget, I thank you for listening. A lot of information in a short period of time. Don't forget to fill out the how'd we do forums at the end. As an evaluator, I have to do that. My overtime, yeah, that's great. Okay, Carol, thank you very much. I appreciate that. Okay.