



Ongoing Improvement: Evaluating an NSF ERC Conference

Background

A consortium of Engineering Research Centers (ERCs), funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF), aimed to foster collaboration, problem-solve, and exchange knowledge among ERC staff across the United States. This event targeted ERC Education and Workforce Development directors, Student Leadership Council leaders, ERC administrative directors, and other university stakeholders focused on student engagement. The conference was designed to be facilitator-led to maximize interactive learning and the sharing of best practices.

Problem

The NSF and the conference planning committee needed to evaluate the effectiveness of the conference format, understand what attendees gained from the event, and determine how the knowledge acquired was being applied post-conference.

Solution

Everett Evaluation developed a comprehensive evaluation strategy. We crafted and administered a post-conference survey, achieving an impressive 93% response rate through strategic distribution methods. These methods included QR codes and email links, as well as integrating survey completion time into the conference schedule.

Additionally, we conducted follow-up interviews with a select group of attendees via Zoom. These interviews provided deeper insights into the participants' perceptions of the conference, the knowledge they acquired, and suggestions for improvements.

The culmination of our efforts was a detailed report that synthesized the survey and interview findings. This report was presented to the conference planning committee and NSF, offering valuable feedback on the conference's impact and informing future planning decisions.

Outcome

The insights provided by Everett Evaluation enabled the conference organizers and NSF to understand the effectiveness of the conference format, the value it brought to attendees, and areas for enhancement. This case study exemplifies how Everett Evaluation's tailored approach to evaluation can yield actionable insights for continuous improvement in educational and professional development initiatives.