



Evaluation Center

Brown School

# Maximizing Impact Through Evaluation

Accomplishments & Impact Report

May 2015–January 2022



Washington University in St. Louis



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**The Evaluation Center provides the right approaches and tools to tackle any evaluation need. Ultimately, we want to help organizations perform better and have greater impact on the people and communities they serve.**

**Nancy Mueller**, Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness & Founding Director



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## Letter from the Co-Deans

Dear Friends,

As organizations seek to understand their impact and demonstrate it to funders and community stakeholders, the Evaluation Center has served as a critical resource connecting the Brown School's evaluation expertise to non-profit service providers. Launched in 2015, the Evaluation Center has partnered with numerous community-based, academic, and foundation partners in documenting the effectiveness of their programs and initiatives. The Evaluation Center is a shining example of the use of rigorous science, transformative educational programs, and mutually beneficial partnerships to advance equity.

We would like to acknowledge the incredible contributions of Nancy Mueller, founding director, who was recently named associate provost for institutional effectiveness. During her tenure, she more than doubled the size of its staff and revenue. She secured over \$8 million in grants and contracts and built a strong collaborative team that is able to take on the most complex of projects. She has partnered with countless faculty across the university and served as a principal investigator on numerous federally

funded research grants. Her collaborations with organizations across the region have resulted in the improvement of services leading to a greater quality of life by those served by partner organizations.

Finally, we are delighted that Nikole Lobb Dougherty has been appointed the Center's new director. She has been engaged in research and evaluation for over 20 years—the last 11 at the Brown School. Since joining the Evaluation Center, she has led or been involved with over 50 grants, contracts, and scopes of work. Additionally, she has been teaching program evaluation and data visualization and communication in the Post-Master's Certificate Program. Nikole brings the knowledge, skills, and leadership experience needed to continue this incredible momentum.

We are proud of the Center's unwavering commitment to support non-profit and academic partners as they work to strengthen their organizations and services, better demonstrate their effectiveness and, ultimately, meet the needs of the individuals and communities they serve.

**Tonya E. Edmond, PhD**  
Interim Co-Dean of the Brown School  
Washington University in St. Louis

**Rodrigo S. Reis, PhD**  
Interim Co-Dean of the Brown School  
Washington University in St. Louis



# **Maximizing Impact through Evaluation**



## Letter from the Founding Director

I am so pleased to share this report highlighting the Evaluation Center's partnerships and accomplishments. At the Center's launch in 2015, I shared my vision for a world where evaluation isn't feared but instead used by organizations to help maximize their efforts and increase their impact. Seven years later, I can say that we've had a ripple effect within our community and nationally in elevating evaluation practice and capacity. We are indebted to the Brown School for responding to the needs of community organizations and supporting the launch of the Center. In alignment with the School's mission, our mission is to advance evaluation science and practice to help organizations create lasting social impact.

These years spent building the Evaluation Center have been exciting and energizing. We are grateful to have worked with almost 70 organizations to strengthen and enhance their evaluation culture and practice. Those partnerships translate into over 100 evaluation planning, implementation, and capacity-building projects and over \$8 million in funding. Our partnerships span public health, professional education, gun violence prevention, mental health, community and workforce development, education, and much, much more. We have also provided affordable, applied evaluation training and coaching for 72 professionals through our Post-Master's Certificate Programs in evaluation and data visualization and our professional development workshops. You will see highlights from some of our partnerships throughout this report.

I am especially proud of the Evaluation Center team that works in collaboration with our partners. We have extensive expertise in many areas, including evaluation, performance management, partnership engagement, methods, data visualization, and strategy development. **We are guided by our core Center values of partnership, equity, community, quality, capacity, and usability in every partnership.** These values keep us focused on doing our best to support our partners in their missions of strong, healthy families and communities.

With my tenure as founding director ending, I am humbled by what we've built, the work we've done, and the partnerships we've formed. It's been an honor to work alongside and learn from my Evaluation Center colleagues. The Evaluation Center is well-positioned for new and expanding pathways to help maximize impact under the leadership of Nikole Lobb Dougherty, the new Center director. Please be sure to read [Nikole's vision for the future of the Center on page 24](#) of this report.

In partnership,

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Nancy".

**Nancy Mueller, MPH**

Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness  
Washington University in St. Louis

Founding Director  
Brown School Evaluation Center

# Our Guiding Values



## Partnership

Ensure our collaboration with partners is respectful, meaningful, and oriented towards participant ownership



## Equity

Evaluate programs, services, and social change efforts in service of advancing equity and supporting others to do the same



## Community

Respect and seek to understand the diverse communities and contexts in which we work



## Quality

Provide the highest quality evaluation services and dissemination products



## Capacity

Strengthen the evaluation capacity of our partners



## Usability

Ensure results guide strategic learning and decision-making

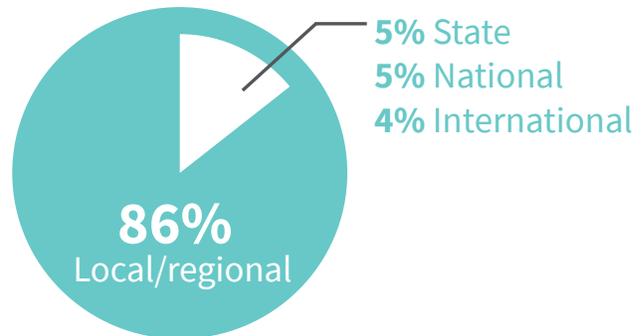
# About the Evaluation Center

The Brown School Evaluation Center serves our community with a mission to advance evaluation science and practice, helping organizations to create a lasting social impact. Since May 2015, the Center has partnered to plan and implement evaluations, provided capacity building opportunities to organizations and individuals, and amplified the impact of evaluations through dissemination.

The Evaluation Center is uniquely positioned within a leading school of social work, public health, and social policy. It provides a training ground for students, opportunities for community-engaged work for faculty and staff, and a connection point for community organizations to the broader resources of the Brown School and Washington University in St. Louis. With our roots in community practice, housed within academia, we leverage the expertise of world-class faculty and staff to enhance our evaluation work and support a culture of learning.

The Center serves an average of 11 partners and trains over 100 individuals per year within the university, across the region, and in communities nationally and internationally.

## Project Geographic Reach



## Our Mission

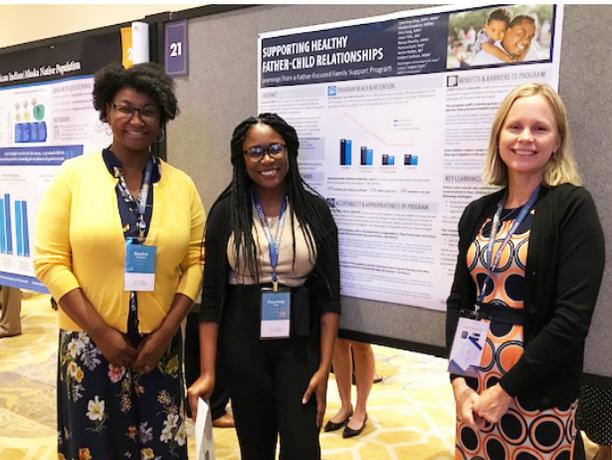
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**Advance evaluation science and practice to help organizations create lasting social impact.**



67

unique partners served since 2015



\$8,664,676

funding secured since 2015



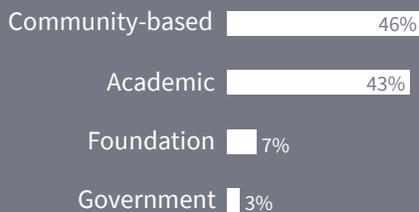
108

projects since 2015

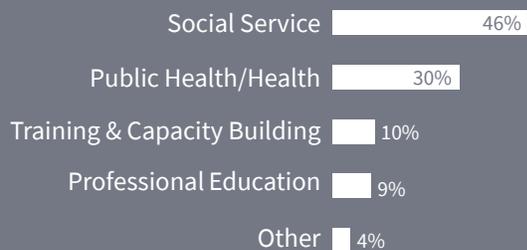
## About our Partners



Most of our partners are community-based or academic organizations.



Most of our partners have a focus area of social service or public health/health.



# Our Evaluation Approach

Across our body of work, the Evaluation Center seeks to evaluate programs and services to advance social change. We utilize an adaptation of the evaluation framework developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)\*—centering stakeholder engagement, dissemination, and utilization of results throughout the evaluation planning and implementation process.



# Our Evaluation Work

The Evaluation Center was established to be a resource for community-based organizations, academic centers and programs, philanthropic and government funders, community initiatives, and individuals working in the social sector, seeking to demonstrate and communicate the progress and impact of their work.

To fulfill our mission, we focus on three core areas:



 [Learn more](#)

\*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [Framework for program evaluation in public health](#). MMWR 1999;48 (No. RR-11)

**Developing the tools and skills to advance equity through evaluation is an ongoing process for both the Center and the field of evaluation. We pursue equity by incorporating the following principles in our work:**

### **Partner-driven**

We strive to bring expertise from the field of evaluation to support evaluations that are owned and led by our partners. The evaluations we implement are not driven by our own agenda.

### **User-friendly Evaluation Findings**

Our dissemination products are tailored to partners' needs in a way that is easy to understand and share with their stakeholders. We also co-create recommendations with partners that prompt them to put evaluation results into action.

### **Stakeholder Engagement**

We help partners engage their key stakeholders in meaningful, inclusive, and culturally responsive ways. The evaluation process should be useful and adaptable for our partners and all of their stakeholders. We encourage and support involving them at every step—from evaluation design to data collection, analysis, and reporting findings.

### **Meaningful Data Interpretation**

We collaborate with our partners to co-interpret evaluation findings, fostering shared learning among their teams and stakeholders. Incorporating their perspectives leads to a richer and more authentic evaluation.

### **Mixed Methods Approach**

We advocate for using both quantitative and qualitative methods to ensure a comprehensive, accessible evaluation. This ensures a more inclusive story that centers the voices of participants.



# Advancing Planning & Implementation

**Organizations in the public health and social sectors seek to better understand the needs of a community, measure progress towards a goal, identify areas for improvement, and communicate impact. However, many organizations don't have the time or expertise to develop and implement strong, realistic evaluation plans.**

**The Center provides customized evaluation planning and implementation services to best fit the needs of our partners and build their internal evaluation capacity for long-term sustainability. We have supported 60 organizations in evaluation planning and implementation since our launch in 2015.**



## Evaluation Planning

As thought partners and facilitators, we work with our partners to establish their program, organization, or initiative's evaluation plan. We do this through the development of logic models, creation of evaluation questions, and embedding evaluation throughout their overall strategy to create change.



## Data Collection & Analysis

Across qualitative and quantitative methods, we develop the tools and systems needed to implement an evaluation plan. We adapt our level of involvement in data collection, management, and analysis to fit the needs and experience of our partners.



## Communicating Impact

As experts in data visualization and communication, we share evaluation findings in a variety of formats based on our partners' audiences. We also include recommendations for making data-driven decisions that support quality improvement and increase impact.

## The Center uses customized planning and implementation approaches with our partners, designed to meet their needs.



### *Better Family Life*

The partnership between [Better Family Life](#) (BFL) and the Evaluation Center spans multiple years and a wide range of evaluation collaborations. We started by co-creating evaluation plans for three BFL departments to provide a roadmap for building and enhancing their evaluation efforts. Next, the Center partnered with BFL and [NeighborWorks America](#) to conduct two community impact assessments. [The findings](#) were used to inform BFL's community development efforts and allowed NeighborWorks to demonstrate the [impact of its funding](#) over time. We also collaborated with BFL to evaluate the pilot of its [St. Louis Metropolitan Area Gun Violence De-Escalation Centers](#), with a focus on understanding the program model, assessing outcomes, and the need for scaling the model.

### *Cigna Foundation*

The [Healthier Kids For Our Future](#)® (HKFOF) funding initiative is a five-year, \$25M investment by the [Cigna Foundation](#) to improve the health and well-being of children and the adults who care for them in communities throughout the world. The Evaluation Center partners with the foundation to evaluate the impact of the initiative, develop a foundation-wide data collection system, and provide tailored support to each HKFOF grantee. We engage HKFOF grantees in various ways. The Center assesses their evaluation capacity, supports the development of program evaluation plans and tools, and provides tailored technical assistance to ensure quality outcome reporting. We also offer regular evaluation training opportunities. The Center is a thought partner for all of the detailed work that goes into building an efficient and sustainable evaluation approach for over 75 grantee organizations each year.



### *Center for Interprofessional Practice and Education*

The [Center for Interprofessional Practice and Education \(CIPE\) at Washington University Medical Campus](#) has increased its capacity for collecting and utilizing evaluation data through an ongoing partnership with the Evaluation Center. We collaborate with CIPE to evaluate the three phases of its interprofessional curricula. The Center manages ongoing data collection and reporting cycles, allowing CIPE to quickly identify strengths and areas for improvement.





### *East Side Aligned*

The Evaluation Center worked closely with [East Side Aligned](#) and a network of out-of-school time program providers to develop a system-wide logic model, create evaluation processes, and build evaluation infrastructure across organizations. The Center guided the evaluation planning and tool design process, which included a system-wide progress report and a tool for assessing youth. To enhance capacity for utilization of the tools, the Center also provided semi-annual trainings on each tool's purpose and how to leverage findings for decision-making at the program- and system-level.

### *Rung for Women*

The Evaluation Center began working with [Rung for Women](#) in 2020 to conduct a developmental evaluation of the Rung model. The Center guided the development of Rung's organizational evaluation plan and informed its strategy development and continuous quality improvement efforts. The Center works in collaboration with the Rung team to conduct a process and outcome evaluation for the pilot cohort. This has involved designing data collection tools and protocols, co-facilitating data parties with Rung staff, and analyzing data to develop an understanding of the implementation of, experience with, and impact of the Rung model.



### *UNICEF*

Since 2010, [UNICEF](#) has been leading global efforts to standardize documentation for those working in humanitarian settings with survivors of gender-based violence. In 2019, UNICEF launched the Gender-Based Management Information System+ (GBVIMS+) in Libya, Bangladesh, and Nigeria, with the intention of implementing across multiple countries in the future. The Evaluation Center, in partnership with the [Brown School Center for Violence and Injury Prevention](#), designed a process evaluation to understand the rollout, uptake, and user experience of using the application at the inter-agency, organization, user, and country levels in two new implementation sites, Jordan and South Sudan. The evaluation findings will be used to inform quality improvement of the application and processes, as well as the rollout to additional countries.



# Strengthening Evaluation Capacity

Supporting the development of evaluation capacity is a core function of the Evaluation Center. We tailor our approach to meet the needs of individuals and organizations in a variety of ways and integrate learning into our work with partner organizations. We support the growth of evaluators across organizations and communities through coaching, custom workshops, professional development workshops, technical assistance, graduate assistantships, and Post-Master's Certificate Programs.





“ This course was well thought out and clearly presented. They kept us engaged throughout the in-class sessions. I look forward to applying what I’ve learned.

*Deborah Ahmed*  
*Better Family Life*

Post-Master's Certificate in  
Program Evaluation Participant

## From in-depth courses to hour-long workshops, the Center offers a range of capacity-building opportunities for anyone who wants to grow their evaluation skills.

### *Post-Master's Certificate Programs*

The Center curates in-depth, interactive, practice-based learning opportunities through [Brown School Professional Development](#). These offerings are designed for individuals to advance their evaluation expertise, processes, and tools. The programs were built with working professionals in mind—they are offered online, at convenient times, and integrate real-world examples and experiences.

The [Program Evaluation Certificate](#) provides professionals an opportunity to advance their evaluations skills through evaluation planning and application. Instructors from the Center leverage an interdisciplinary approach that includes readings, reflections, guest speakers, and experiential activities.

The [Data Visualization and Communication Certificate](#) leverages tools like Excel and PowerPoint, which are most accessible to non-profits and institutions, to build participants' skills at visualizing data and communicating it to various audiences. This program focuses on best practices and theories behind visualization, how to make effective data visuals, and strategies for dissemination products such as dashboards, reports, and one-pagers.

### *Summer Institutes*

Since 2017, the Center has led in-depth, week-long courses, Developing Comprehensive Program Evaluation Plans and Effective Project Management Techniques for Social Service Settings, at the [Brown School Summer Institute](#) giving 41 students and practitioners an opportunity to focus on building evaluation and project management skills.



“The course provided me with a new language, practical tools, and vital skills—to engage partners, evaluate programs, manage projects, and communicate data to diverse stakeholders.

*Carly Heminway  
Queen of Peace*



“What I found most useful in this course was the specific step-by-step “how to’s” of creating excellent charts in Excel. I fully understand the “best practices” in data viz after taking the course, and have a basic toolkit for developing graphs. Unlike other professional development courses I have participated in, with this course, I was able to apply new knowledge immediately!

*Cassandra Hage  
Washington University in St. Louis*

## Professional Development Workshops

In collaboration with Brown School Professional Development, the Center facilitates numerous workshops for Brown School students, staff, and community practitioners on a wide array of evaluation-related topics. Since 2015, Center staff have facilitated 26 workshops for 541 participants. These half-day workshops introduce components of the evaluation process to attendees including evaluation planning, engaging stakeholders, using Excel for data reporting, qualitative data collection and analysis, data visualization, and project management.

## Graduate Student Opportunities

We are committed to supporting the next generation of evaluation leaders and practitioners. The Center engages graduate students through research assistant positions and practicum experiences to provide applied, real-world evaluation opportunities. We tailor these opportunities to meet the needs of our projects and partnerships and the competency goals of our students. Since the Center's inception, we have worked with 59 students, including 17 practicum students. Eleven of these students later transitioned to roles as Evaluation Center staff. We also regularly guest lecture for graduate-level courses to expose Brown School students to the field of evaluation and its methodologies.

## Customized Training

We recognize that our partners have unique needs so we work closely with them to deliver customized and relevant trainings. Our training partnerships have included organizations as diverse as the [Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis](#), the [Missouri History Museum](#), the [National Association of County & City Health Officials](#), and the [International Center for Child Health and Development](#). These custom experiences have leveraged our existing learning opportunities in addition to training on project management and manuscript development.



### Workshop Training Topics

- Evaluation Planning: Starting on the Right Path
- Engaging Your Stakeholders in Your Program Evaluation Process
- Leveraging the Power of Excel for Your Program's Data and Reporting Needs
- Presenting Your Data in Charts: Using Excel for Clearer Communication and Increased Impact
- Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis
- Project Management: Techniques for Staying on Task and on Time

59

Students  
trained



## Coaching & Consultation

Enhancing our partners' evaluation capacity is facilitated by our participatory approach in planning and implementing evaluations. We also serve as coaches, consultants, and thought partners for organizations that are focused on building their organizations' culture of learning and evaluation and quality improvement systems.



HILLMAN

# Contributing to the Field and Amplifying Impact

A key component of our evaluation work is contributing to the science and practice of both evaluation and the fields in which our partners work. Some of our partners want to share their evaluation process or findings with a wider audience. We collaborate with them to seek opportunities for dissemination to others in their field.

Publishing or presenting evaluation findings, best practices, or lessons learned advances the field and can also amplify the impact of an evaluation. The Evaluation Center logo symbolizes the ripple produced by a single drop of water, and this is intentional. Dissemination causes a “ripple effect” that results in our partners, similar organizations, and the entire field benefiting and learning from the evaluation.

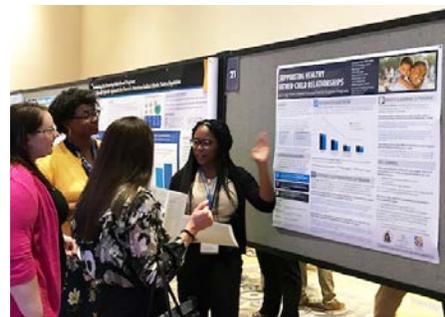
Our staff and students have **authored 143 journal articles and contributed to 21 presentations in the areas of public health, social work, and medicine.**

**143**journal articles  
contributed**21**presentations  
delivered

## Collaborating with our partners to disseminate evaluation findings leads to stronger products and a wider audience.

### *A Focus on Fatherhood*

The Evaluation Center partnered with [Fathers & Families Support Center](#) (FFSC) to conduct a 5-year impact evaluation of its New Pathways to Responsible Fatherhood Family Formation project which provides evidence-based responsible parenting education, economic stability and mobility services, and healthy marriage education to economically disadvantaged fathers in St. Louis. The randomized controlled trial compared fathers in two groups: the Family Formation program and the Economic Stability program. In collaboration with FFSC, we've shared evaluation findings in [Family Process](#), were invited to develop a [video abstract](#) to accompany the article, and shared a poster presentation at the Healthy Marriage Responsible Fatherhood (HMRF) Biennial Grantee Conference.



 [Learn more](#)

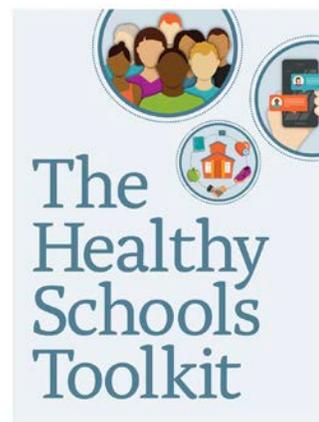


### *COVID-19 Testing in Schools*

The Evaluation Center and its collaborators on the [RADx Up](#) grant have been working since the summer of 2020 to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the Special School District of St. Louis County. The findings are published in [Pediatrics](#) and [Journal of Neurodevelopmental Disorders](#) and were [presented at the Brown School's Open Classroom](#).

### *Tools to Help School Leaders Support the Whole Child*

This applied research and translation project funded by the [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation](#) was a collaboration with Health Equity Works. We worked with two school districts in the St. Louis region to research what is needed to support the whole child so that schools are places where students are healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. The project leveraged social science methods, such as social network analysis, group model building, and message testing to leverage the people, systems, and messages needed to support children in school systems. As a result of the research, the [Healthy Schools Toolkit](#) was created and disseminated both regionally and nationally.



 [Learn more](#)

## A Collaboration to Assess Community Needs

[United Way of Greater St. Louis](#) commissioned the [United Way of Greater St. Louis Community Needs Assessment 2020](#) for the St. Louis region to answer the following question: What services and resources are most needed within the United Way’s five impact areas and across its 16-county service region? The impact areas were: 1) Establish financial stability; 2) Foster learning; 3) Improve health; 4) Provide food & shelter; and 5) Strengthen communities. The Evaluation Center led the secondary quantitative data component, the triangulation of the qualitative and quantitative data sources, and the process to prioritize counties’ needs. United Way released the findings to the St. Louis community in January 2020.



Learn more



## Support for Young Adults Leaving the Justice System

The [Saint Louis Integrated Health Network’s RE-LINK Initiative](#) supports justice-involved young adults by providing referrals to community partners in health, mental health, housing, employment, and education. The Evaluation Center developed the [Coming Home for Good](#) report to share the progress and effectiveness of the RE-LINK program, provide lessons learned, and demonstrate accountability with stakeholders.

Learn more

## Establishing Opportunities for Evaluators

The [Evaluation Association of St. Louis \(EASL\)](#) advances the field of evaluation practice and enhances networking and professional development opportunities for evaluators in the greater St. Louis metropolitan area. EASL is a local affiliate of the national association of professional evaluators, the [American Evaluation Association](#).



The Evaluation Center is a founding member and co-lead the launch of EASL. Our team is active in EASL and some have also served on the Board of Directors. Currently, Nikole Lobb Dougherty is the vice president. A few examples of how our team is helping to advance evaluation practice include [Virtual Data Parties](#), [Evaluation in a Virtual World](#) and [How to Create a Simple Visual Style Guide WITHOUT a Designer!](#)



# Looking to the Future

The Evaluation Center has had a ripple effect within our community and nationally, as noted by Nancy Mueller, our founding director. The racial reckoning and global impact of the last two years has reinvigorated the Center's desire to take stock in our role creating lasting social impact. The Center is at a pivotal point to expand on our work to further advance social, economic, health, and racial justice through evaluation, in close alignment with the Brown School's strategic plan, [Driving Equity 2030](#). To reflect the Center's growth and the evolving world around us, we are launching a strategic planning process to help us re-align and better articulate our vision, mission, and the values that drive our work.

I am humbled by the thoughtful and inspiring partners and organizations the Center has had the good fortune of working with so far and am excited by the possibilities the future holds. Looking forward, I envision the Center creating a world where evaluation is embraced with three priorities in mind:

## **Equitable & Culturally Responsive Evaluation**

Like the Brown School, the Center holds a commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion as a core value. Funders, non-profits, social service agencies, and the field of evaluation also embrace equity as a core value. The Center will continue to expand the ways in which we advance equity and culturally responsive evaluation practices and principles. We will do this both within our team and in partnership with the organizations and communities we work with.

## **Partner-Driven Evaluations**

The Evaluation Center was launched as a response to hearing from organizations in our region about their desire to demonstrate and maximize their impact. Throughout the Center's strategic planning process we will assess the evaluation services most needed by our community and non-profit, funder, and social service sector partners. We will continue to support evaluations that are partner-driven, with a goal of fostering mutually beneficial collaborations.

## **Evaluation Capacity Building**

Training and capacity building of organizations and individuals will continue to be one of our north stars. Over the years, we have witnessed the desire of many partners to develop internal evaluation capacity and anticipate that the demand for evaluative thinkers and evaluation practitioners will continue to grow. This is an exciting opportunity for the Center to continue to expand its commitment and offerings for evaluation capacity building.

Because it is anchored in a world-class school of social work, public health, and social policy, the Center is uniquely positioned to leverage the expertise of our faculty and students to help advance our evaluation work. Together, we can create lasting social change.

In partnership,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nikole".

**Nikole Lobb Dougherty, MA**

Director  
Brown School Evaluation Center



# People



**Hannah Allee, MSW**  
Assistant Director of  
Evaluation



**Rachel Barth, MSW**  
Evaluation & Capacity  
Building Manager



**Raven Brown,  
MSW/MPH**  
Evaluation Associate



**Meihsi Chiang, MSW**  
Evaluation &  
Dissemination Manager



**Yelyzaveta DiStefano,  
MA**  
Analyst



**Nikole Lobb Dougherty,  
MA**  
Director



**Manyi-Eyong Ayuk, BS**  
Graduate Assistant



**Heather Jacobsen, MPH**  
Evaluation &  
Communications Manager



**Courtney King,  
MSW/MPH**  
Evaluation & Student  
Experience Manager



**Missy Krauss, MPH**  
Senior Analyst



**Emily Laurent, MPH**  
Analyst



**Nina Lukow, BA**  
Graduate Assistant



**Ashley Moore, MA**  
Evaluation Associate



**Leah Nason, BA, BS**  
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**Liz Rolf, MS**  
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**Liz Vestal, LMSW**  
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## Affiliate Faculty & Staff



Learn more

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**Bobbi Carothers, PhD** Senior Data Analyst, Center for Public Health Systems Science, Brown School

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**Jason Purnell, PhD** Associate Professor, Brown School and Vice President, Community Health Improvement, BJC

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## Connect with us!



Learn more

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