# Executive Summary

The Community for Advancing Discovery Research in Education (CADRE), the official name of the Discovery Research K12 (DR K-12) network, is a collaborative effort of three organizations: Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC); Abt Associates Inc. (Abt); and Policy Studies Associates (PSA). Funded by the National Science Foundation in 2008, CADRE provides assistance for projects funded under NSF/EHR/DRL's DR K-12 program.

The University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute’s Research and Evaluation group provides evaluation services to the project. NSF has approved a comprehensive evaluation plan that details the scope of the evaluation, which is designed to address the formative and summative information needs of CADRE partners and the NSF. This report presents the results of one evaluation activity: a web-based survey of DR K-12 Principal Investigators who attended the 2012 DR K-12 PI Meeting, conducted from June 13-15, 2012 in Washington, DC.

Through collaboration with the Leadership Team, the evaluators developed a survey instrument designed to capture participants’ feedback on individual sessions as well as the overall structure and implementation of the meeting. The instrument collects participants’ satisfaction levels through scales and open-ended responses. Additionally, the survey invites participants to reflect on the ways in which their future work may be impacted by their experience at the meeting. The survey was administered through an online platform (Survey Monkey); the link to the survey was emailed to all participants at the close of the Meeting. Of a possible 320 respondents, 159 participants completed the survey, for a response rate of 50%.

Overall, the preponderance of positive and enthusiastic open-ended comments suggests that participants were highly satisfied with the 2012 DR K-12 Meeting. In general, feedback on the meeting was tremendously positive. Most notably, responses showed participants’ satisfaction with networking with colleagues. One of the strongest themes in the feedback was the overall value of the connections that were established at the meeting. Respondents reported that the connections they made exposed them to new ideas and perspectives that will be invaluable in their future work. The opportunities to hear from NSF program officers and directors in plenary presentations and in one-on-one and roundtable formats were also highly appreciated. One of participants’ most commonly used descriptors of these events with NSF representatives was “valuable.” Additionally, poster presentations were very popular, as were the remaining plenary presentations. The innovative formats of Paper Feedback sessions, Crossroads sessions and interactive poster session were remarkably successful. Collaborative presentations also received high praise by presenters and attendees alike. Several participants expressed their hopes that the PI meeting would be continued in the future.

Suggestions for improvement to the meeting included scheduling presentations on like subject matter into different time slots, as much as possible.

Key findings are presented below.

**Satisfaction with Meeting Sessions**

The different types of meeting sessions included panel presentations, joint PI sessions, paper feedback sessions, Crossroads sessions, poster sessions (including one interactive poster session), and working group and SIG sessions. Across all of these different types of sessions, participants largely reported that new information was conveyed and that this information had implications for their work. Given the opportunity to comment, many participants stated that they anticipated that their attendance at the meeting would have a direct and positive effect on their work. Participants most frequently cited Joan Ferrini-Mundy’s plenary presentation, the session on NSF funding programs, and the poster sessions as the highlights of the meeting.

Appreciation for Interactive Meeting Sessions

Open-ended feedback revealed that across the meeting sessions, participants were most satisfied when the sessions were collaborative or interactive in nature. Respondents who participated in Crossroads sessions found that the innovative and structured format was effective, creating a supportive atmosphere where participants felt comfortable sharing their ideas. Respondents who participated in the Crossroads sessions explained:

* “This format gives structure to a session in which feedback and collaboration are desired. To me, it's much more effective than other standard presentation modes, even others that intend to be interactive.”
* “I found that the format worked really well. It was well facilitated so that everyone got a chance to speak. Additionally, the extended discussion time gave more people who needed it more time to think about their comments/suggestions. I think it was critical that there was a time for discussion when the presenter could not comment, which prevented everyone from just asking them questions.”
* “Excellent format for discussion.”

Similarly, participants explained that the interactive and collaborative nature of the Paper Feedback sessions was especially valuable. An illustrative comment includes:

* “I enjoyed the opportunity to see my colleagues' work in detail, and the opportunity to provide and hear suggestions on how the work could be enhanced.”

In addition, presenters at these sessions reported receiving valuable constructive feedback. Presenters at the Paper Feedback sessions commented:

* “Feedback sessions are an amazing format for getting really targeted advice about project components under development. This was one of the best conference sessions I have ever had, in terms of the valuable suggestions I got to push my own work forward.”
* “The audience helped us focus on the purpose of our tool, and this will guide the revision.”

The interactive poster session – comprised of brief, timed overviews of eleven projects, followed by a facilitated discussion – was well received by participants. Comments suggest that the structure worked well and could be replicated in the future:

* “This format worked really well -- much better for me than the general poster sessions.”
* “The format of this interactive poster session was well facilitated. The discussion afterwards was the most thoughtful and focused of any I heard at the conference.”
* “Do more of these.”

Importance of Networking Opportunities

Over the past few years, participants have very much appreciated the networking opportunities provided at the DR K-12 PI meetings. As such, one of the goals of the 2012 meeting was to support professional peer connections and the exchange of ideas. A large number of respondents felt that this goal was well achieved. Most participants took advantage of both formal and informal networking opportunities, and nearly three-quarters (74%) of respondents found that the balance of formal and informal sessions was “just right.”Moreover, for many, networking was one of the most important aspects of the meeting. Illustrative comments related to networking follow:

* “I am thinking about my work differently, both in terms of the goals and products and resources, and in terms of how I can grow, and my project be strengthened, from contact with others whom I met. My conceptual development around the work has been greatly impacted, and my eyes have been opened to a few perspectives (such as research angles) that will be important to me. I am supposed to follow up with two people to tap into their resources or prior project work, so there are also potential tangible outcomes from the connections I made.”
* “I met several people whose projects are relevant to my own, and have already been in contact with PIs from at least one very synergistic project. We have exchanged materials and will be in touch again soon.”
* “I was able to connect with and discuss ideas, problems, and projects with a number of very thoughtful and experienced researchers and developers.”
* “I made new professional connections and can see the possibilities for future presentations and/or collaborations.”

Value of NSF Representatives’ Input

Many respondents noted that networking with NSF representatives was important to them. In addition to one-on-one meetings with program officers, plenary presentations and roundtable discussions offered information on NSF’s directions. Participants commented that these opportunities were helpful in understanding NSF’s priorities, with respect to their current projects and future plans.

More than two thirds of respondents (67%) met with their program officer at the meeting. Illustrative comments suggest that these meetings were highly valuable:

* “I met with my Program Officer twice in a substantive way. It provided a wonderful opportunity to get to know her better and understand her priorities for us as a project. Most important, it allowed me to get valuable feedback during an early stage of my project and even more valuable ideas about next steps.”
* “Open access to program officers and the ability to ask and get questions answered was fantastic.”

Joan Ferrini-Mundy’s plenary presentation offered a strategic vision for NSF and the EHR Directorate, situating DR K-12 project within that vision. More than three-quarters (86%) of respondents stated that they learned new information about strategic directions for NSF and the EHR Directorate, and just under two-thirds (65%) of respondents indicated that they learned new information that has implications for their work. Illustrative comments include:

* Joan Ferrini-Mundy talked about big picture NSF ideas that help me understand what is going on at a national level and is extremely helpful to situate our work.”
* “Joan's presentation was quite inspiring.”

Similarly, the NSF Funding Programs session was quite well received. Nearly all of those reporting attendance (98%) said they learned new information that has implications for their own work. Almost three-quarters of respondents (73%) said they were going to follow up about one of the funding sources.

* I like this session because it allowed for targeted conversations about specific funding. Questions from other attendees were also very useful.”
* “I liked the overview of funding priorities, and stories behind those. Very useful.”
* “Great session! Very well organized and informative! Be sure to leave this type of session in future meetings.”
* “Great to be able to visit with the program officers and hear about all of the funding programs.”

**Participants’ Suggestions for Improvement**

Feedback on the DR K-12 PI meeting was overwhelmingly positive. Many participants did not provide any suggestions for improvement at all, and those suggestions that were mentioned were not repeatedly noted. Broadly, two suggestions were offered by some participants. First, it was suggested that a formal meeting launch on Wednesday would have been beneficial, rather than scheduling a poster session prior to the Thursday morning Welcoming Breakfast. One participant explained, for example:

* “The meeting did not have a formal launch on Wednesday, and this was problematic. People trickled in all day on Wednesday (the poster session was not well attended), and the meeting didn't really launch until Thursday morning. There needs to be a plenary at the beginning of the meeting that signals to everyone that the meeting starts on a particular day and time.”

As noted above, some participants commented that too many similarly themed sessions were offered at the same time. A few participants suggested that scheduling by strands might be one viable alternative.