Author’s response to reviews

Title: Building capacity: A Cross-sectional Evaluation of the U.S. Training Institute for Dissemination and Implementation Research in Health

Authors:

Cindy Vinson (cvinson@mail.nih.gov)
Mindy Clyne (mindy.clyne@nih.gov)
Nina Cardoza (nina@chanzuckerberg.com)
Karen Emmons (kemmons@hsph.harvard.edu)

Version: 1 Date: 02 Oct 2019

Author’s response to reviews:

Dear Dr. Straus:

We are very grateful for the excellent review that our paper, Building capacity: A Cross-sectional Evaluation of the U.S. Training Institute for Dissemination and Implementation Research in Health, recently received. We are pleased that the reviewers generally found the paper to be interesting and useful. We have responded to each of the reviewers’ comments below:

Reviewer #1:

Background:

Comment #1: It would be useful to include a table outlining the content provided in the course. Thank you for this suggestion. We added a new Table 1 that provides an overview of course content (2011-2015) on page 6.

Comment #2: Please indicate if the program continues to be static or if changes have been made over the course of the delivery in response to changes in needs or literature. Table 1 now shows how the material evolved over time. Information about the current materials is also provided in the “Limitations” section and a link is provided in reference #7.

Methods:
Comments #1 and 2: Although acceptable, and addressed in the limitations, the methods were quite dependent on the initiating organization. Portfolio analysis and the comparison of presenters at the annual conference may be helpful but it is unclear if other options for determining output independent from the NIH alone might have yielded different results. The goal of TIDIRH was specifically to increase NIH funded dissemination and implementation research grants. However, a firewall exists between program that sponsored TIDIRH and the review branch of NIH, and program cannot interfere with the review process to privilege certain grants. Although we did consider other measures, the only objective way to get grant application and award information is through NIH – any other approach would rely on participant recall and would be much less accurate. Throughout the paper we have added-in language to clarify that NIH grants are peer-reviewed.

Similarly, the Annual Conference on Dissemination and Implementation Research in Health is now run by Academy Health. All abstracts submitted to the conference go through a blinded peer-review process for selection, with many others involved in the review and selection of papers for presentation. We clarify this in the paragraph starting on line 160 by explaining why the conference is an objective source.

Comment #3: The surveys provide valuable information but both surveys went out in August which may have limited responses. We agree that the launching of the survey in August may have been difficult timing for some, but the survey period did extend through September and included multiple reminders. We suspect that the lower response rate for unselected applicants, at least to some extent, reflects their rejection for the training. We have added the timing as a limitation on page 15.

Results:

Comment #1: Consider dropping Figure 1 as the content is captured in the narrative. Figure 1 has been removed as suggested.

Discussion:

Comment #1: Discuss the potential implications of the change in format on the ongoing success given that they identify the engagement and opportunities for collaboration in the face-to-face setting as one of the reasons the results cannot be replicated by those who were not accepted into the course. Thank you for raising this issue. When we developed the “hybrid” training model we made sure that there were still opportunities for trainees to interact and develop collaborations. We have added language to the last paragraph of the “Limitations” section to describe that model better.

Reviewer #2:
Comment #1: Clarity is needed as to how skills development per se was determined. We agree that the term “skills” was not the appropriate term and have changed from “skills” to “methods” throughout the paper to clarify.

Comment #2: Did graduates and UA give their consent for their information to be used this way? Participants were informed that the survey was going to be used to evaluate the program and that completion of the survey acknowledged consent. Participants were also informed that data would be reported in aggregate form.

Comment #3: Did any of the graduates come from academic institutions not in the US, and would this impact on the assessments of activity post-course, which may be restricted to overseas academics/researchers? Did the cost of course attendance pose a barrier for non-US based academics/researchers, thus potentially biasing the findings? International trainees did participate in TIDIRH and were included in the analysis. Several of the international trainees from low- and middle-income countries received travel support from NIH to participate and one of the trainees from Argentina subsequently received a D&I R01 grant that is included in the portfolio analysis. We created an updated Table 3 that includes the numbers of domestic and international trainees and UA. The trans-NIH funding opportunity for D&I research grant is open to international applicants and attendance at the annual D&I conference also has international participation. We believe that access to both the training and to funding opportunities limits this form of bias. We updated the first paragraph of the “Background” section to reflect the international opportunity for D&I grant applications. We removed the reference that made the training opportunities appear only to be focused on the US on line 106.

Comments #4 & 5: What was your definition of 'large grant', and provide context as to the specified grant mechanisms? We followed the NIH language for different size grants, as now specified in the text, and have provided a link to the NIH website that provides descriptions for different types of grants in reference #6.

Comment #6: What were the available response options for the faculty survey data present lines 211-217? The range of responses has been added on lines 225 and 228.

Comment #7: "Dont" and "wasnt" should be typed in full. We have made these changes.

Comment #8: The figure has no Title and is blurred, x axis is not labelled properly. The figure has been removed.