



ENGAGED RESEARCH AND EVALUATION CENTER

***Translating research and evaluation
into practice for stronger communities***

The Engaged Research and Evaluation Center (EREC) conducts research and evaluation to improve the access, quality, and impact of initiatives that serve the public good.

EREC bridges university expertise with community needs by translating research into practical, accessible tools, including interactive maps and data dashboards, self-reflection rubrics, presentations, webinars, policy briefs, reports, and journal articles. EREC partners with MSU faculty, students, and communities to produce engaged scholarship that addresses real-world needs and promotes healthier, more productive environments for all.

What Does EREC Do?

- **Produces actionable recommendations:** EREC translates research findings into practical insights that help partners make informed decisions.
- **Improves policy effectiveness:** EREC conducts large-scale evaluations to identify ways to reduce opportunity gaps for under-resourced communities.
- **Builds community capacity:** EREC equips partners with the tools, skills, and insights they need to use data for continuous improvement and lasting impact.
- **Facilitates community-university partnerships:** EREC connects MSU faculty, students, and community partners to advance shared research and evaluation goals.
- **Serves as MSU's evaluation hub:** EREC provides expertise, tools, and connections to strengthen MSU's capacity for high-quality, community-engaged evaluation.

Benefits to Community and University

EREC brings university and community partners together to address shared research and evaluation needs—creating benefits for both.

Benefits to Community:

- Maps, dashboards, and data visualization for decision-making
- Research reports and briefs with actionable recommendations
- Statewide data tools and infrastructure
- Access to MSU expertise and resources

Benefits to University:

- Support for community-engaged evaluation and grant applications
- Student skill development through community-engaged research
- Connection with community partners
- Opportunities to demonstrate the community impact of research

Featured Evaluation Initiatives

Michigan 21st Century Community Learning Centers

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) are federally funded out-of-school time programs serving high-poverty, low-performing schools. The main goals of 21st CCLC programs are to provide students with out-of-school time academic enrichment, diverse extracurricular activities, and educational support for their families. Since 2002, EREC has provided ongoing, comprehensive evaluation of the implementation and effectiveness of Michigan's 21st CCLC programs.

32n Out-of-School Time Grant Program

The 32n Out-of-School Time (32n OST) Grant Program is a state-funded initiative that expands access to quality before-school, after-school, and summer learning opportunities for K-12 children and youth across Michigan. Since 2024, EREC has provided statewide evaluation of the initiative, assessing program reach, implementation, and outcomes to support continuous improvement and inform statewide decision-making.

Michigan Out-of-School Time Site and Community Data Tool

The Michigan Out-of-School Time Site and Community Data Tool helps OST providers access location-based information for state 32n and federal 21st CCLC grant applications. Users can enter a site address and set a radius to view data on the needs of their school district, community, and nearby publicly funded OST programs. The tool helps providers identify service gaps, build partnerships, and better target resources to support children and families.

Child Care Mapping Project

The Child Care Mapping Project provides clear, easy-to-use information about child care access, availability, and trends across Michigan to help inform planning, policy, and investment decisions. Since 2022, EREC has developed mapping tools to increase child care supply and address community access needs. News organizations, regional networks, and legislators also use the maps as a quick reference for understanding child care trends, gaps, and needs across the state.

Strong Beginnings Program

Strong Beginnings is Michigan's state-funded pre-K program for eligible 3-year-olds, providing an additional year of free, high-quality early learning. Since 2020, EREC has provided statewide evaluation of Strong Beginnings, assessing program implementation and outcomes to support continuous improvement and inform decision-making.

Youth-Adult Partnership Rubric

This research-informed tool combines research and field experience to help organizations strengthen youth-adult partnerships across diverse settings. Youth-adult partnership is an essential and effective practice for developing young people's critical thinking and leadership skills, which are particularly important for navigating the complex challenges of the 21st century. The rubric supports professional development and formative evaluation, has been translated into Spanish, and is publicly accessible.



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