Ready-Made Resources for Extension Evaluation Competencies

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Abstract: Evaluation capacity building has been part of professional development in many Extension organizations for a number of years. Many resources are currently available for Extension organizations to create or refine the evaluation competencies they want to build in their agents, specialists, administrators, and collaborators. This article describes some current and relevant resources. Materials and networks are listed for ready access by Extension personnel.

In order to achieve practical evaluation practice in Extension, many organizations have turned to evaluation capacity building among agents, specialists, and administrators. Some Extension organizations have created customized evaluation competencies for their staff, in addition to evaluation expectations and "deliverables" such as impact reports.

If you are beginning this conversation in your Extension organization, or if you are fine-tuning what you already have, several relevant resources are available to you. The list of resources below is by no means comprehensive, but can provide you with information to consider for your own Extension organizations.

International Standards and Companion Book

Fourteen basic core evaluation competencies were recently developed by the International Board for Standards in Training, Performance, and Instruction (IBSTPI). The IBSTPI used a validation process that involved 450 professionals all over the world (IBSTPI, 2009). These competencies are arranged under four headings: professional foundations, planning and designing the evaluation, implementing the evaluation plan, and managing the evaluation. These competencies are:

Professional Foundations

1. Communicate effectively in written, oral and visual form

2. Establish and maintain professional credibility

3. Demonstrate effective interpersonal skills

4. Observe ethical and legal standards

5. Demonstrate awareness of the politics of evaluation

Planning and Designing the Evaluation

6. Develop an effective evaluation plan

7. Develop a management plan for the evaluation

8. Devise data collection strategies to support the evaluation questions and design

9. Pilot test the evaluation design and procedures

Implementing the Evaluation Plan

10. Collect data

11. Analyze and interpret data
12. Disseminate and follow up on the findings and recommendations

Managing the Evaluation

13. Monitor the management plan

14. Work effectively with personnel and stakeholders

A companion book for these competencies is *Evaluator Competencies: Standards for the Practice of Evaluation in Organizations* by Russ-Eft, Bober, de la Teja, Foxon, & Koszalka (2008). A useful feature of this book is that it recognizes that there are different levels of evaluation and different levels of experience with evaluation. For those who may be interested in using this book with a variety of learners in their organization, chapter five describes competency use by "by those new to evaluation," "by experienced evaluators," "by managers," "in academic settings," "by consultants providing evaluation seminars" and "by associations."

Examples of Competencies from Other Extension Organizations

Examples provided by other states can give some insight into expectations for agents and specialists of those organizations. Some organizations make direct connections to competencies in their documentation. For example, Tennessee includes a program accountability section in its agent performance appraisal. Michigan offers relevant learning activities and references as part of its evaluation, applied research and scholarship

core competency. Check each Extension Web site or, even better, the relevant Extension evaluation contacts in each system.

The Extension Education Evaluation Listserv of the American Evaluation Association

This listserv currently has approximately 170 subscribers who are Extension education evaluators and other outreach evaluators. Members of the list will respond to your questions about evaluation studies, skills, and competencies. To send a query to this listserv, contact Donna Peterson at <djpeterson@mcw.edu>. To learn more about what resources and insights this group might be able to offer you, contact current chair Nancy Franz at <nfranz@vt.edu> or current program chair Lisa Townson at <lisa.townson@unh.edu>.

The Extension Education Evaluation Community of Practice on eXtension

This community of practice was approved by eXtension in 2008. Its members are focused on evaluation capacity building for Extension faculty and staff. To send a query to its members regarding evaluation competencies, contact co-chairs Ben Silliman at <ben_silliman@ncsu.edu> or Heather Boyd at <hboyd@vt.edu>.

Resources with a Specific Focus

If your focus is on 4-H professionals, seven learning modules were designed by a national team of 4-H evaluators in 2008. *National 4-H Learning Priorities-Evaluating for Impact* (Arnold et al., 2008) is available on the Web <http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov/comm/NLP_Impact_9-2008.pdf>. The modules were based on a novice, advanced beginner, and practitioner framework. This resource is sponsored by National 4-H Headquarters.

If your focus is building evaluation competency of people involved in community-based programs, either your own Extension staff or others, a compendium of activities, handouts, and presentations is available that covers many aspects of evaluation. *Building Capacity in Evaluating Outcomes: A Teaching and Facilitating Resource for Community-Based Programs and Organizations* was published in 2008 by University of Wisconsin-Extension <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/evaluation/bceo/index.html>.

Acknowledgements

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