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ABSTRACT

Evaluation procedures for the systematic measurement of Extension's total impact or effectiveness in rural Shawano County, Wisconsin, involved developing comprehensive descriptions of Extension programs from 1960 to 1975 to list types of activities and offerings, topics, attendances, and overviews of efforts in program areas like agriculture, home economics, and 4-H. Trained professional interviewers contacted by telephone 238 county or community leaders and a random sample of 1192 county residents 18 years or older. Fourteen general conclusions on methodology are presented and discussed for the use of others who are considering a similar evaluation. These include: (1) the concept of "impact", the levels of evidence hierarchy, and the general benefits model help organize an evaluation; (2) different reasons for total program evaluation influence design and data sources; (3) thorough documentation of the Extension program is necessary; (4) evaluation should focus on recent (3-5 years) efforts when trying to assess impact over time; and (5) exact replication of this entire evaluation is unnecessary; suggestions are given for the most effective areas of evaluation. (DS)

IMPACT

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Contents

Introduction

How can we best determine who has contact with Extension? How can we get people's reactions to Extension? What kinds of data are appropriate in total impact evaluations? What procedures will help data to be understood and used? These were some of the major questions of the Shawano County evaluation.

The Shawano County Evaluation Project has three main purposes:

1. To systematically measure Extension's total impact or effectiveness in one county.
2. To develop evaluation procedures.
3. To explore how evaluation data are used.

This report, as Part 2 in a series, summarizes key conclusions and ideas about the procedures used. We hope these ideas will help you determine whether some of the procedures used could fit your Extension program or one you are familiar with or responsible for. The usefulness of the ideas will probably be more clear if you have a situation in mind as you read.

Evaluation is defined as making judgments about Extension's total efforts at the county level by comparing actual contacts, reactions, etc. (data) with descriptions of what is desired (criteria). Evaluation is not seen as *measurement,* or as *proof* of effect, or as determining the *attainment of educational objectives.*

Summary of Major Steps and Tasks

1. *Selection of County.* A cooperative agreement was made between the district director, state Extension director, evaluation specialists, county Extension staff, and the county Extension committee. Selection was subjectively based on expected cooperation, diversity of program, diversity of clientele, and scope of program.
2. *Building Support.* During early stages of the project a lot of time was given to informing all Extension administrators and program leaders, Shawano County Extension staff, and local leaders of the project. They increased their understanding of it, gave their approval, and also made many suggestions. State and national advisory committees were also formed for these purposes.
3. *Staffing and Resources.* The county staff was not expected to carry the burden on the evaluation tasks of data gathering, interpretation, and communication of results. In addition to the project codirectors, a half-time research assistant was hired for the duration of the project. Two people from Shawano County were hired ad hoc to do local data gathering. Telephone interviewing was subcontracted to a professional survey office.

4. *Program Inventories.* The ad hoc local staff working with project codirectors developed comprehensive descriptions of all Extension programs in the county from 1960-1975. These written descriptive summaries included types of activities and offerings, topics, attendance by various clientele, and overviews of efforts in all program areas like agriculture, home economics and 4-H. These summaries not only were part of evaluation, but defined the limits of the program to be considered in surveys.
5. *Think Groups.* Small groups of administrators, program leaders, specialists, district directors, and Shawano agents reviewed the program inventories. Along with advisory committees, these think groups made suggestions about the type of evaluative data they would find useful and how data ought to be gathered. This activity was intended to increase the likelihood of eventual data usage.
6. *Surveys.* Two groups of Shawano citizens were identified and interviewed by telephone in early 1976 by trained professional interviewers.
   Leader Survey: 238 people (or about 85% of those identified) who held an elected or appointed office or were considered leaders by people knowledgeable about county and community affairs were interviewed.
   General Public Survey: A random sample of 1,192 residents, 18 years or older, were interviewed. Answers to an early question separated those who had considerable contact with Extension from those who had little or none. The former group was asked many more questions than the latter as interviewers used different interview schedules.
7. *Preliminary Data Summaries.* The sums of various responses and percentages from survey data were prepared for immediate sharing with members of think groups, advisory committees, and other Extension staff interested in early results.
8. *Standard Setting.* As survey summaries were shared via meetings and mail, a procedure was used whereby recipients were asked to state certain minimum data levels they would accept as indicative of program success. This procedure evolved as a central aspect of the entire project because of its power to generate interest, to help Extension staff put meaning on data, and to form judgment on how good the county program was.
9. *Judgments and Conclusions.* The Shawano County Extension staff discussed preliminary data and made judgments. Program leaders, administrators, and subject-matter specialists offered their interpretations and conclusions. The evaluation team struggled with reaching a consensus on major conclusions and implications, and eventually the first major report was published.
10. *Communication of Results.* Various written, visual, and verbal techniques were used. Evaluation results were shared via the book *Impact of Extension in Shawano County: 1. Conclusions and Implications*, many summary leaflets, and more detailed summaries. Overhead transparency presentations were given at many meetings by the district director, evaluation team and county Extension staff. Also, many one-to-one contacts were made.

11. *Evaluating the Evaluation.* The nature and extent of usage of the evaluation results by Extension staff primarily in Wisconsin were determined. These data, along with additional recommendations for what data are useful, comprise *Impact of Extension in Shawano County: 3. Usage and Appraisal.*

Conclusions

The remainder of this second major report presents 14 general conclusions on methodology for consideration by others who are exploring the possibilities of a similar evaluation or parts of it. Readers are also encouraged to review page 23 which lists other available reference pieces.

Discussion following each conclusion includes additional detail about procedures and some suggestions for further application.

1. The concept of "impact," the levels-of-evidence hierarchy, and the general benefits model help organize an evaluation.

IMPACT

Impact is the amount of Extension's contact with people and the impressions Extension leaves on them. As the district director who requested this evaluation says, impact is the degree to which Extension penetrates the county, communities, and individuals, and the extent to which the result is positive.

Impact is indicated by the number of people contacted by all of Extension, the frequency of those contacts, their resultant learning, their application of ideas gained from those contacts, their perceptions of benefits from Extension, and their judgments of Extension.

This project determined Extension's impact using perceptions of different groups:

- Total county population
- Specific audiences, such as farmers, 4-H families, the elderly, professionals, and Native Americans.
- Key cooperators or heavy users of Extension.
- Leaders.

Because impact is an idea that encompasses various types of results, it is a useful concept. It pulled together results due to multiple contacts, such as a family might have through several kinds of programs. This assessment of all accomplishments within one evaluation gave insights as to the total value of a program, different from what would be obtained by any single assessment.

The Shawano evaluation considered all of Extension's impact in the county as one. The following efforts were included in the Shawano County program that was evaluated:

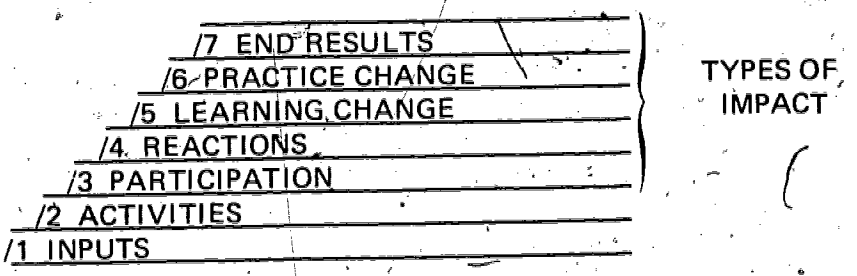
- Both agent and specialist activities.
- Activities in and outside the county in which residents participated.
- All of Wisconsin's 13 program areas.
- All methods including mass media, group, and individual contacts.
- Extension efforts with various groups and communities.
- Repetitive contacts over a multiple-year period (15 years).

Agents were initially surprised that the evaluation would include such a broad spectrum of efforts. Advantages soon became apparent: Extension efforts with certain commodity and other small groups could be shown more fully if combined; the value of input from statewide specialists and resources into a county program

could be shown; contacts with more than one program area by an individual could be documented; and comparative data on the effectiveness of methods such as bulletins, state radio network, and conferences could help Extension decide how much to invest in each.

LEVELS-OF-EVIDENCE HIERARCHY

Bennett's hierarchy served as a basic tool for organizing impact types and for identifying needed evidence.[1] The hierarchy "said": (1) identify Extension's staff and budget commitment over the 15-year period, (2) identify the activities conducted or performed so as to know what survey follow-up was appropriate, (3) identify the number of people reached by Extension, (4) identify people's reactions to Extension, (5) identify the amount of learning due to Extension, (6) identify any application of new ideas, and (7) identify any benefits due to applying ideas.



Structured interview questions (with lists of possible responses) were developed for most of the seven levels, but the wide range of programs being evaluated meant that open-ended questions were also needed.

GENERAL BENEFITS MODEL

Forest provided an additional framework for identifying, describing, analyzing, and summarizing various impacts.[2] Leaders as well as the general public were asked whether they or their communities benefited from Extension in any of the following general ways:

- Developing groups, government, and democratic processes.
- Developing individual roles and abilities.
- Improving health and safety facilities and practices.
- Conserving and improving the natural environment.
- Securing economic improvement.
- Expanding educational resources or opportunities.

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[1] Claude Bennett, "Up the Hierarchy," *Journal of Extension*, XIII (March/April, 1975), 7-12.

[2] Laverne B. Forest, "Using Values to Identify Program Needs," *Journal of Extension*, XI (Fall, 1973), 24-34.

Based on major value systems and representative of long-term goals for human endeavors, the six types were used to categorize responses showing how Extension efforts in various and diverse ways had contributed toward central themes in people's lives.

In sum, our experiences led to several specific suggestions for future "total program" evaluations:

- Conceptual frameworks are needed to design, carry out, interpret, and communicate total county program evaluation results.
- The selected frameworks must encompass many things, such as several program areas, multiple-year efforts, multiple contacts, various outcomes, and various value systems of people.

2. Different reasons for total program impact evaluation influence design and data sources.

The purpose of this evaluation was to get usable "total impact" data (any and all kinds of contact) and resultant impressions. Only secondarily was it concerned with contacts specific to certain subject matter or problems. The general evaluation design thus fit all program areas.

Two general types of use for these total impact data emerged as most relevant: internal decision making and external accountability. The county staff and statewide subject-matter specialists were more likely to identify specific evidences needed for their own particular program decisions. Administrators, in contast, were more likely to request data for reporting and accountability purposes.

Following the logic in these divergent opinions, the evaluation team's task was to balance needs assessment and methods evaluation (for making internal decisions) with results evaluation (for accountability purposes).

Our specific suggestions are:

- Consider "total" impact evaluation such as this one if your general reason for evaluation is accountability.
- Set priorities for usage early in an evaluation. This will help channel ideas into relevant questions and weed out extraneous "Gee whiz, that's interesting" type inquiries. If program decision making is the focus of evaluation, intensively involve all the relevant decision makers within programming units at an early stage so they identify data they can use. They will need help in suggesting questions to ask in surveys and in understanding evidence that comes from surveys.

3. Thorough documentation of the Extension program is necessary.

Many sources of data served to document Shawano County programs. Office records, annual reports, project files, circular letters, agent vitae, news files, Wisconsin Extension management information system (EMIS) data, and records of non-credit program offerings from state-based departments and specialists were all used to develop Extension program summaries. Shawano agents were not involved in this documentation process except to review information for accuracy and completeness.

The program summaries were used by special task forces called think groups. Summaries indicated the scope and depth of programs and thus served as a basis for deciding survey content and focus. The summaries also documented the extent of certain long-range efforts as they occurred over several years—a story that was not as apparent when looking at single-year efforts. The additive effects of continuing sequential programming became much more evident through this activity.

Based on our experiences, we recommend you:

- Prepare a comprehensive summary(ies) for the program time period to be evaluated.
- Save professional time, if possible, by hiring ad hoc people who are somewhat familiar with Extension.
- Review not only county records, but those of other Extension units.
- Use documentation for planning data collection and evaluation.
- Share documentation with potential users of evaluation data.

4. Generalizing substudies of impact in specific program areas and audiences is possible through interviewing one large random sample.

In addition to questions on overall impact asked of all leaders and citizens, certain questions were asked of specific respondents depending on demographic characteristics (such as occupation, race, association with 4-H, etc.) which allowed useful impact evaluations relative to farmers, 4-H families, Native Americans, professionals, and many others.

"Split interview scheduling" provided for gathering information on a variety of topics without burdening every respondent. Randomly assigning some interview questions allowed data to be treated as though they came from all respondents. Several kinds of split scheduling were used.

First, several versions of the same interview were used with the general public. As an opening interview question, respondents were asked whether they'd had "a

lot," "some," "a little," or "no" contact with Extension. Those answering "some" or "a lot" were then randomly assigned to one of two lengthy interviews. Respondents saying they'd had "little" or "no" contact were given a shortened interview. This procedure minimized annoyance to people who'd had little or no contact, yet allowed results from each of the three types of interviews to fit together.

For example, all respondents were asked if they'd used Extension methods such as bulletins, radio, television, meetings, or events. However, not every respondent was asked about the helpfulness of each method.

As another example, all respondents were asked to react to Extension's personnel and organization, but not all were asked about the same ideas. Some were asked if Extension was worth the tax money invested, while others were asked if Extension was efficient in carrying out its work.

Second, interview subsections were used for specific general public respondents. For instance, respondents answered questions about Homemaker Club experiences only if they'd had home economics program contact. Only farmers got questions about contact with Extension's agriculture-agribusiness educational program.

The impact of Extension through 4-H was determined by asking respondents additional questions if they said they: (a) were current or past 4-H leaders; (b) had children in 4-H, either at the time of the interview or in the past 15 years; or (c) were themselves 4-H members at some time.

Third, leaders were randomly assigned to answer questions on only one of three major community resource development programs. One third of the leaders interviewed (about 90 out of 272) were randomly selected to answer questions about industrial development efforts in the county, another third about outdoor recreational resource development, and the other third about land use planning education.

In summary, sampling and interview design were important to data collection in the Shawano evaluation. Careful attention to drawing a sufficiently large random sample allowed analysis and reports for many population segments. Where 200-500 may have been large enough to generalize about the total adult population, 1,200 were needed to assure that relevant subgroups would have sufficient numbers for additional analysis. Said another way, had it been necessary to get 100 Native Americans or EFNEP participants among respondents and still keep the total sample representative of the whole county, 3,000 interviews would have been required. In our case, a compromise was made, given a limit to project resources.

One major exception in the evaluation to including a subsurvey within a larger survey was the leader survey. Since county and community leaders were felt to be a key group to interview, a citizen sample would have to be too large to encompass a good leader sampling. Questions asked leaders were significantly different in many cases, so a separate survey was used in this evaluation. The results were unique and useful in themselves, and others are encouraged to consider surveys of leaders as a way of getting useful impact evaluation data.

5. Statewide or district sampling can increase the survey's general value if specific county results are of less concern.

The value of generalizing evidence beyond a particular county should be considered early in an evaluation. Is it better to invest in 100 interviews in 10 randomly selected counties or in 1,000 interviews in 1 county? The answer depends on the intended use of the evaluation results.

Basic to this decision is the structural makeup of the Extension program. When a strong "county" system is in existence, results may need to tell how strong a county program is. However, because no typical county exists, think about how useful the findings from a single county's program may be for specific decisions in another county.

If regional, district, or area program planning predominates, county findings might have less meaning.

In summary, the type of sampling depends on what population the evidence is supposed to represent. Evaluation should consider geographic factors and organization structure that affect programs.

6. Respondents' perceptions of impact are valid alternatives to empirical observations of actual behaviors.

The Shawano County evaluation looked at Extension through local people's eyes. All data in the project—end results, reactions, contact—are perceptual.

The reasons for emphasizing these data are:

- Perceptual data are easier to collect than "hard evidence." Scientific controls, observers, pre- and post-measurements, and other canons of science are more difficult, if not impossible, to apply in multiyear, multidiscipline, multimethod, multiaudience, and multistaff program evaluations.
- Voluntary adult programs depend more on perceived value to participants or potential participants than on actual value.
- Perceptual data are less costly, both in money and in irritation to respondents.
- Perceptual data are more easily understood. Feelings and testimonies of people are easily understood, while some users may not understand how numbers of actual changes made by people or institutions affect their lives or reflect value of a program.
- Perceptions allow respondents to review their experience retrospectively and suggest major program sequences, interconnected events, and additive effects.

On the other hand, weaknesses in Shawano data are these: vague adjectives within response categories such as "a lot of contact with Extension" are hard to interpret. One person may think of "a lot" as hundreds; another may think of tens. Users of data want to know what adjectives, such as "a lot," mean. We do not recommend usage of only vague adjective response categories.

In sum, whether actual or perceptual data are collected depends on intended use, but do not downgrade perceptual data because they fail to meet the physical scientist's criteria for data.

7. Retrospective evaluations identify major program relationships and additive effects beyond those implied in initial program objectives.

Objectives state what Extension designs or intends, even when in consultation with learners. Perceptions are what people believe and feel, regardless of program intent. This evaluation, although limited by program summaries, was not confined to determining if objectives were met.

In this evaluation, local leaders and program participants looked into their immediate past and identified retrospectively the meaning that Extension's efforts had for them and their communities. In this way, major programs were identified by clients, not Extension. Thus, in this evaluation, objectives or goals stated before actual programs were conducted were not of concern and, in fact, did not exist. If they had existed, they were not likely to be useful for identifying the additive benefits as perceived by participants.

The assumptions inherent in this discussion mean that EMIS data are also too narrow; they are limited to quantitative data—how many, when, how much time, etc.—according to what is planned as an educational objective.

Thus, in planning a similar evaluation, allow people to name benefits that accrue over several years without regard to objectives that may or may not exist and are certainly irrelevant to most participants at survey time.

8. Evaluation should focus on recent (3-5 year) efforts when trying to assess impact over time.

This evaluation defined the program as events and offerings occurring during the past 15 years (1960-1975). This longer time frame was chosen to allow evaluation of multiple-year efforts.

The 15-year period was appropriate to summarize a long-range Extension program and in relation to community resource development projects (the leader survey). However, it was usually too long a span for the general public respondents to recall meetings attended, topics covered, or benefits due to those meetings.

Furthermore, Extension users of evaluation data persisted in asking what percentage of people had contact during the past single year. The more-recent information seemed most relevant, or users are simply used to thinking of programs in terms of a single year.

Leader identification included retired county board members, some of whom no longer felt involved in community affairs, had not used Extension, or were not interested in contributing opinions about Extension's impact. Retired members could have been omitted from the sample without loss of valuable information.

In conclusion, five years is an appropriate time period. Questions relative to participation in the past year will also give useful data.

9. Exact replication of this entire evaluation is unnecessary.

The Shawano evaluation was a pilot effort to learn about certain kinds of evaluation. Reflection tells us that its cost, level of general information, and other factors makes duplication unwise. For example, some data were used and others weren't, and some methods of communicating results were better than others. Some things worked and some didn't.

Several suggestions are:

- The project's size should be related to: (a) the primary intended use . . . not every possible use; (b) the capability of the system to develop ideas, design data collection, analyze, and report results; and (c) the capacity and willingness of the audience or participant system to absorb and use information while it is timely.

- An early decision should be made on exact reasons for evaluation and on intended usage of data to be collected. People coordinating similar evaluations are advised to set priorities systematically on data to be obtained and include in surveys questions to get only those data.
- The exact focus, goals, and procedures of another county impact evaluation should consider inclusion of data items that were found useful by recipients of Shawano evaluation results. These relevant data items are discussed further in *Impact of Extension in Shawano County: 3. Usage and Appraisal.*

10. A program evaluation of this magnitude requires an unusually large personnel investment before, during, and after data collection.

Even if we presume this evaluation will not be replicated, many types of resources are still needed in a smaller evaluation. Thousands of dollars, hundreds of hours, and technical capabilities to sample, collect data, analyze and communicate are still needed in an evaluation of this size or if part of this evaluation would be repeated.

The Shawano evaluation benefited by the cooperation of the University of Wisconsin-Extension's Division of Program and Staff Development, the district supervisor, the Shawano County Extension staff, excellent survey and analysis specialists, supportive administration, and particularly, cooperative and supportive local citizenry. These would still be needed in a smaller version of impact evaluation.

Specifically, a system contemplating a similar, but smaller, evaluation would need to allow for:

- A coordinator who will lead and manage the evaluation from beginning to end.
- Technically trained people in sampling, data collection, and analysis tasks.
- Many hours of time for setting priorities on reasons for evaluation, data to be collected, and exact usages.
- Persons in line supervisory roles who can "bridge" to other parts of the system when sharing data.
- Many hours of time for interpreting, writing, and reporting after all data have been collected.

11. Complex statistical analysis is not necessary for optimum utility and understanding of evidence.

Data used for accountability and program improvement may not need the scientifically rigorous statistics commonly advocated by academicians. Whether in or out of Extension, people want practical data related to their concerns that help make choices now, are credible, and are informative. Such data may not have to come from a randomly drawn sample and a well-described population to be useful.

Data may not need sophisticated association or difference tests and inferential statistics if users want mere descriptions and percentages on how various groups answer key questions.

In sum, provide findings in person or through papers in straightforward and easily read ways. Do not assume that all the hearers or readers understand or want statistical significance or scientific design. Rather, understanding and meaning are results of involvement, interest, credibility, and intelligibility, and not of mere volume or precision.

12. Understanding data and deriving conclusions are as crucial as design and data collecting.

Evaluation is more than data collection. Determining the value of a program requires comparison to some accepted standard. Interpretation of findings by recipients is essential to their acceptance and use of data. Determining the real program value and getting interpretation by users occur in direct proportion to the amount of time given to those ends.

This project, like many others, devoted much time to designing appropriate surveys and to sharing findings with faculty and administrators, but it also gave much time and used several approaches to determining implications:

- Project team members identified themes in data, major conclusions, and possible implications for accountability or programming. These were shared in early written reports.
- The project team shared data at meetings. Audiences helped establish success criteria and expressed what they viewed as the consequences or implications of data when discussing with others.
- Evaluation data shared through the mail were accompanied by questions asking recipients to develop implications.
- The district director who initiated the evaluation chaired sessions at county, district, state, and interstate levels, with much of the discussion centered on the meaning of these findings. He served as an effective "bridge" to other parts of Extension.

In sum, many people helped disseminate and interpret results. The following conclusions can be made from interpretation experiences:

- It is time-consuming and difficult to develop implications.
- Data have *little* value unless users help to develop conclusions and interpretations.
- Individuals and groups need stimulation through presentations and discussions to come up with implications.
- Because of diverse values, needs, interests, philosophies, and criteria by Extension staff, interpretations are also diverse. As such, each interpretation is valid in itself. Time is needed to develop and consider all interpretations.
- More time must be given to learn about developing interpretations and implications of evaluations.

13. Recipients of evaluation data must identify their criteria for interpretation and reference if data are to become meaningful.

Evaluation has not occurred without comparison of WHAT IS (data) with an expression of WHAT SHOULD BE (standard, criteria, desired level of performance).

Standards can be established by relying on: (a) similar situations; (b) authoritarian prescribed levels, such as laws or what "experts" say; (c) research; (d) personal beliefs and values; and (e) combinations of these ways.

When initial evaluation data were released, Extension staff were asked to express what they thought was an acceptable level of success before they looked at the data. More than 60 Extension staff and 10 county board members participated in this "setting-standards" procedure.

Specifically, the procedure asked individual staff 100 questions such as: "What percentage of the adults in Shawano County should have had contact with Extension in any way during the past 15 years?" and "What percentage of families should have had a child in 4-H at some time?" They did this in group meetings and through the mail. The procedure alerted them to soon-to-be revealed data and helped them get personally involved in the data.

During group meetings, informal discussion of expectations became part of the data presentation. Some people shared what they thought *should be* the percentage of participation and why. On the basis of a different perception of the county, others suggested a different level. Many people learned more about the county. Many clarified their beliefs about success. Group consensus may have been useful and could have been reached, but in these situations it was not considered necessary.

Setting standards within group meetings was much more effective than by mail. Many minds working together contributed various ideas and conditions for "success/failure." For instance, individuals who consistently set a standard of 100% participation (because "everyone ought to have contact with us") were encouraged to consider that: (a) Extension may not have programs to meet every need, (b) some people feel they don't need Extension, or (c) those who have never heard of Extension cannot use its programs.

On the other hand, those who set very low expectations ("less than 1% of a county population using Extension is enough for success") were reminded of the 13 program areas and various means of reaching a broad range of clientele.

In summary, we strongly recommend that future total impact evaluations set standards at or near the time of data collection and reporting. Specific procedures can vary, but the general process is a must for several reasons:

- Data are meaningless to people without their own reference points for interpretation. Data become more purposeful.
- All multiyear Extension programs involving adults who have their own needs have evolved or changed drastically from an original goal if they existed at all, and thus original goals are not useful as a reference point.
- Users of data are not likely to be the same people who originally set the goals and thus do not automatically accept the goals stated 5-15 years ago as valuable.
- Cross-discipline or multiple-unit program evaluations are less likely to have preprogram goals, to which data can be compared.
- A criterion that an Extension person sets becomes a commitment.
- The setting of criteria is a learning process for Extension professionals.

14. A variety of timely, short, simple, attractively visualized techniques to communicate evidence gets acceptance.

The Shawano evaluation shared findings in many ways: (a) long narrative written materials; (b) short summary papers; (c) brochures highlighting findings on a particular topic and announcing the availability of longer papers; (d) professionally prepared audio-visual media such as slides and transparencies; (e) group meetings with Shawano County agents and leaders, statewide, district, and county Extension faculty, ES-USDA (now SEA-Extension) administration, North Central district directors' association, and the national advisory committee for the project; and (f) the series of three major reports.

Preliminary drafts went to selected faculty for reaction. Finished reports were given a wider distribution, both within Wisconsin and out-of-state.

Several problems were encountered. It was difficult to get the right information to the right people when they wanted it. On the other hand, some people still are in no hurry to consider the possible implications from this evaluation.

Some individuals received massive amounts of paper—some in draft form to be reread in a revised form. So many titles and so much similarity blurred the real distinctiveness of each piece of information. Thus, "overkill" happened in some cases.

We concluded that:

- Potential users must be personally involved. A personal involvement is more easily secured through pleasant, informal sharing, where data are easily understood. Consider the time available to audiences, their commitment to being involved. Reinforce points with words and visuals. Don't ask people to wade through 64 pages first, then send them a 1-page highlight 3 weeks later. Arrange the reporting of evidence according to how people learn: awareness, involvement, acceptance, practice, and change.
- Two-by-two slides were less conducive to group sharing and discussion. Invest in overhead transparencies to aid the process of presenting percentages and tables. Transparencies help organize information according to themes, major findings, major conclusions, clientele or program specific information.

What Next?

As the previous conclusions have implied, the impact evaluation of Shawano County's total Extension program has already provided a better picture of Extension's value to the county and its people. The methods may thus have some utility in other counties and states for purposes of accountability, which, without question, is continuing to increase in importance. In looking to answers on how to deal with these accountability pressures, be creative and imaginative; do not feel that old procedures are necessarily the best. Consider three methods: (1) Shawano evaluation methods, (2) ones you've used, and (3) new, creative ones you've yet to try.

Additional Materials

Setting Standards in Evaluation, A Methodology
Procedure used to elicit level of participation standards from Extension personnel reviewing Shawano Impact data.

Concepts and Procedures of the Shawano Evaluation Project
A detailed reference to design and methodology used in the project.

Developing a Survey of the Combined Impact of Extension
Simplified survey for limited resource situations.

Supplemental Approach to Questions in a Combined Impact Study
Listing of alternative questions for a combined impact study.

Developing a Survey that Combines Several Separate Studies
Discussion of how, when and why of combining two or more studies in one survey.

An Approach to Examining Farmers' Use of Extension
Questions used in the Shawano Project plus suggestions.

An Approach to Examining Impact of 4-H
Questions used in the Shawano Project plus suggestions.

An Approach to Examining the Impact of Extension Methods
Questions used and organization of the Shawano Project.

An Approach to Examining Impact of Home Economics Programs
Questions used in the Shawano Project plus suggestions.

Data Patterns and Meanings
Examples of how data were handled after they were secured.

Telephone Surveys as an Extension Tool
Based on experiences in addition to the Shawano Project, this piece deals with specifics for preparing a telephone interview schedule.

Time Efficient Ways of Following Up On Programs
Showing how the Bennett categories of evidence can be used in several situations, this piece uses the Shawano Project as an example.

Survey Schedules: A, B, C, Leader
A & B are lengthy sets of questions for respondents with considerable contact with Extension; C is a shortened version. The leader schedule parallels other schedules in some ways.

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Major Report in this series: Impact of Extension in Shawano County

1. Conclusions & Implications
2. Methodology
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